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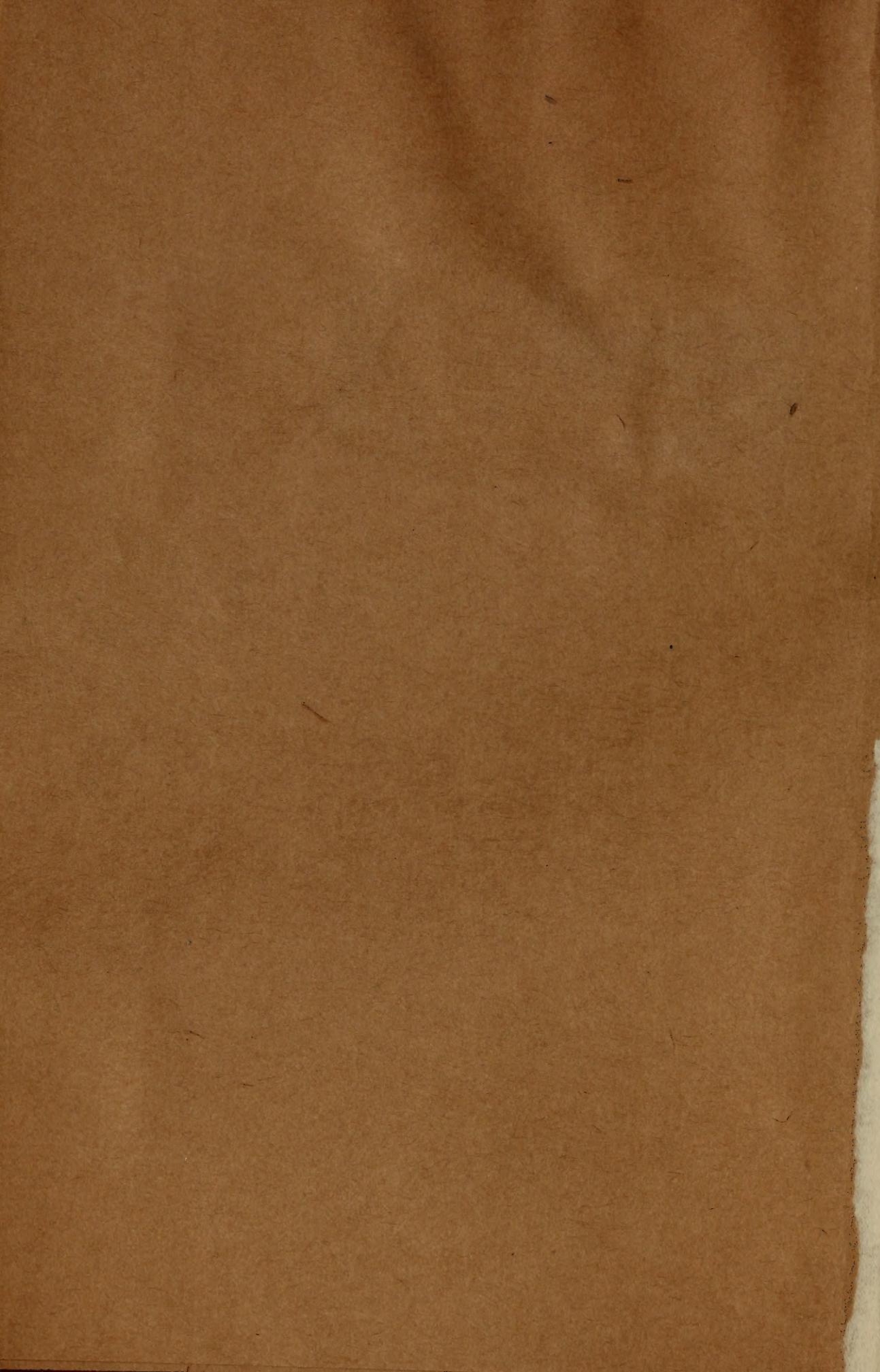


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## **MEMORIES AND NOTES**

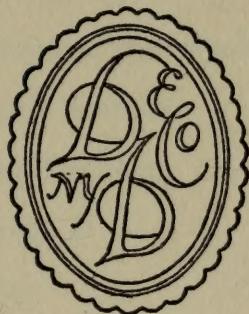
*By Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins*

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CAPTAIN DIEPPE  
BEAUMAROY HOME FROM THE WARS  
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MEMORIES AND NOTES

# M E M O R I E S A N D N O T E S

BY  
ANTHONY HOPE



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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. CLAPTON—WITH AN EXCURSION TO HITCHIN . . . . .	I
II. LEATHERHEAD—AND MY FATHER . . . . .	18
III. MARLBOROUGH DAYS AND FACES . . . . .	29
IV. OXFORD—AND BALLIOL UNDER JOWETT . . . . .	49
V. OXFORD AT LARGE—AND THE UNION . . . . .	69
VI. LONDON AND THE LAW . . . . .	84
VII. LAW, LITERATURE, AND A LITTLE POLITICS . . . . .	101
VIII. FROM A NOVELIST'S WINDOW . . . . .	116
IX. THE LURE OF THE THEATRE . . . . .	133
X. THE WIDER STAGE . . . . .	152
XI. LONDON MIXTURE . . . . .	168
XII. SPEAKERS, TALKERS, AND CONVERSATION . . . . .	184
XIII. AMERICAN INTERLUDES. (i) ON THE ROAD . . . . .	199
XIV. AMERICAN INTERLUDES. (ii) AT LEISURE . . . . .	217
XV. THE OTHER HALF OF LIFE . . . . .	235



# MEMORIES AND NOTES

## I

### CLAPTON—WITH AN EXCURSION TO HITCHIN

**I**CAN make no complete or composed picture of my early childhood. I cannot say whether it was happy or not. (No more I can about any other period of my life, for that matter.) My recollections are occasional, transient, and mainly trivial. My little self emerges for a moment, and then vanishes. The transient appearances are worth recording only as funny instances of the freaks of memory.

For examples—I see my sister and myself aiding the course of nature by peeling our—and one another's—skins off after scarlet fever. I see myself climbing and trampling over a big wood-pile in the stable yard, conquering enemies, and once sore wounded by the fall of a big log that crushed my finger and involved a hurried flight to maternal consolation. "That horrid wood-pile!" I remember sobbing out. "I'll never go to it again." But I was back next day. Then I see the curate's children, at nursery tea with us,

refusing to put treacle on the bread-and-butter. Our ordinary fare was bread-and-butter, treacle was a treat. To them treacle was the everyday affair, butter a luxury not to be contaminated with the more vulgar condiment. This gave us much wonder and bred much discussion on economics; for though we were far from rich, it seemed that the curate's children were farther still. Again, I remember looking in the glass one day, and lamenting that I was such an ugly child. I was right, no doubt, but I always wonder where I got my standards of comparison, for my brother (if he will excuse my saying so) was no beauty in his early youth, and though my sister grew up very pretty, she did not make the mistake of being pretty too soon; it is generally fatal.

But the stage on which these little scenes were set is clear in memory. I passed the first nine years of my life at Clapton House, a dignified old mansion standing back from the road behind its wall and its drive, just opposite St. James's Church, of which Mr. Irby was vicar (I don't remember Mr. Irby as a human being, but I am pretty sure that he was vicar). Clapton House was then the seat of St. John's Foundation School for the Sons of Poor Clergy, of which my father was Head Master. It was rumoured that the house had once been inhabited by a Bishop; it was even said

that his ghost haunted one of the big attics, though for my part I did not, and do not, believe that Bishops haunt houses—and certainly not attics. One hopes that they are better employed. But the old place was not unworthy of episcopal dignity. On the garden side you looked down a broad gravel walk between hedges that stretched for nearly a quarter of a mile down towards the watery meadows of the Lea. So looking, on your right was the wilderness (for children paradise enow!), then a formal garden with a round pond, on which I taught myself the rudiments of skating (all I ever have learnt, and they cost me forty-two accurately counted tumbles; but that is no matter. I am probably one of very few Londoners who have learnt to skate on their own private ponds); then a lawn with a big mulberry tree; and then a splendid rookery—a double row of great trees, and such a cawing at all proper seasons and occasions! The view to the left was of much less account, for on that side had been erected modern school-buildings, dining-hall, class-rooms, and so forth; but the effect was somewhat redeemed by a big tree which supported a giant's stride. This—and the mulberry tree—are clear in affectionate retrospect; only that Cakebread, the gardener, had a commercial mind, bent on furnishing pots and pots of mulberry jam—and, for purposes

of detection, mulberry stains are pretty near as fatal as fingerprints. I have forgotten to mention the kitchen garden which lay, I think, just beyond the rookery. It had brick walls, with peaches and nectarines, also "bitter" cherries; my mother made her own cherry brandy—not much, but enough to swear by.

In the big old house—and its outlying servants' quarters, offices, and stable buildings (some newly adapted perhaps—I don't remember about that)—we all lived, a mixed family of (I suppose) about a hundred and fifty—ourselves, the boys—a hundred or so then—assistant masters, matron, and servants. We had our own family rooms, of course—notably a large and probably very "Victorian" drawing-room on the first floor, where my mother could forget that she was a schoolmaster's wife and receive her friends in dignified seclusion. But we were all of us in pretty close contact; for instance, our dining-room on one side of the hall—a rather stately hall-faced the Masters' Common Room on the other side of it, and as I came out from our room there was always a chance of a friendly encounter, or even a lively skirmish with one or other of these kindly men, especially with Mr. Peach, a great friend of mine; he was moreover always ready to carry me down the broad gravel walk on his back, unless on a day when he chanced to be incapacitated,

as he would apologetically inform me, by a bone in his leg. Or one might chance on a big boy—a monitor, perhaps!—on his way to or from my father's study upstairs, when again there would be an exchange of playful badinage or blows. It was altogether a lively house—even when the liveliness did not rise to a storm, as on occasions when Lizzie, our Lincolnshire nurse, declared that things were going from bad to worse in the nursery and that something must be done about it. Then there would be, if it were possible, a *sauve qui peut* to the wilderness, there to lie, if it might be, till the gale had blown itself out. Of Lizzie I myself have only kindly memories, but I am not sure that she was so popular with the other two denizens of the nursery; I was, in fact, accused of being a pampered favourite, and it is to be feared that there was some truth in the charge. For that matter, Adela spoilt me too. I shall call her by no other name, and say no more about her than that, being supposed to be my governess, she was really my first love. Across the years I pray leave to waft her a retrospective kiss.

Over this large and mixed family (a Roman *familia*, rather) my father presided, Head and Autocrat. It is difficult for me, who came years later, to live with him in such easy and spiritually coeval friendship, to recall exactly how it was between us in these my very early

days. He was a handsome man, with strong features thick dark hair, and (as the mode was then) big whiskers; in the middle forties, strong and active. His lightest word was law to everybody on the premises, from my mother downwards; and he had a quick temper and a stern way with him. But I do not remember being afraid of him, except in the sense that a citizen is afraid to break the law. Neither do I remember being very fond of him (I can afford to say that in this place, because I shall have something different to say later on). He was, in the end, to me more a Potentate than anything else; the size of the *familia*, the extent of his realm and the absoluteness of his rule, may go far to account for that.

But he was a monarch who could unbend and (as I understood even then) greatly enjoyed unbending. A dinner-party, in prospect a care to my mother, put him in good spirits. With the aid of friends and assistant-masters he manned an Eight on the Lea, and himself stroked it (I was sometimes stuffed in on the seat beside the cox); he liked walking with his dogs, he loved (and did to the end) shooting, and he took great pleasure in driving his old one-horse wagonette, which held solitary tenancy of the roomy stables of Clapton House—where, we may suppose, that Bishop once housed his coach, his four horses, and his

bewigged coachman—the Bishop in a wig too in those days!

However, the wagonette quite satisfied me, and memories cluster round it, for I had many a drive to London in it—to real London, for we considered that Hackney, though our local metropolis, was no more than a suburb of real London, and Clapton a residential and quite genteel suburb of Hackney—Upper Clapton being particularly genteel. Real London was another matter. But, apart from that, my first remembered glimpse of public events was from the wagonette. It was the General Election of 1868, and I was told to remember having seen the hustings, because that was the last time anybody would see hustings and open voting at a General Election. Mr. Gladstone was coming into power, and would pass the Ballot Act. I do not know that I understood much about that, but I did, even then, understand that in our family what Mr. Gladstone said he would do was as good as done, however sorely the Powers of Evil might wage war against him. Well, sure enough, Mr. Gladstone did come into power, and did pass the Ballot Act; it all happened exactly as I had been told it would.

Digressing for a moment from the wagonette (in which, however, I propose soon to take my seat for a long and important journey), I may record my second

memory of great events. For though I remember "Garibaldis," and "Magenta" frocks, I never asked the origin of their names. I was in Mr. Matthew Rose's shop in Mare Street, Hackney, with my mother who was seated at the counter, doing her shopping, when the shopwalker (a man of such dignified appearance and manner that I felt that there ought to be a more dignified name for him—perhaps there is, but I don't know it) came up to her, and said, "Have you heard, Madam, that Paris has surrendered?" My mother's grave concern over the news showed that it was of much importance, for she was not ordinarily a politician or apt to worry about how the world outside was getting on. But later I had a side-light on the siege of Paris from another quarter—I hope a trustworthy one. I have a glimpse of myself at Fulham Palace—how I came to be there I don't know. Dr. Tait still presides there, though he is now Archbishop really—and he leaves a faint memory of paternal manners and gaiters. But I am much more struck by a pretty and lively lady who has a large retriever dog—a beautiful dog, but with the merest stump of a tail. On enquiry as to this, I am told that the dog, his master, and his mistress, had all been through the siege, and that, when famine became acute, a painful question arose as to the dog. But it was solved by chopping off his tail, making soup

from it, and giving him the bone! Whereby all three were saved. I hope that the story is true, because it is rather picturesque. But the lady was vivacious.

Leaving that—and after all it is only a minority of anecdotes that ever went through what the idealist philosopher described as the empty form of happening—I come to my greatest and longest journey in the wagonette. One morning—I cannot date it at all precisely, but I must have been about six years old—my father and I set out early from Clapton House to drive to Hitchin in Hertfordshire. We travelled in a leisurely way, with a long rest and a good “bait” for the horse at a half-way house, and trundled into our destination about tea-time, pulling up at the old house in the fine old street called Bancroft, the house where my father had lived as a boy and where his mother still lived with two of her children.

My father had a great sense of family. My mother had it, too, but in a different way. She accepted with placid pride and faith one of those distinguished descents that are perhaps more common in Scotland than in England. She was a Grahame (or Graeme), and a Grahame at all events might be descended from anyone great, so why not from Robert the Bruce, the great Marquis of Montrose, and Bonnie Dundee? And when

the rolling years revealed to us children the astonishing and gratifying number of our Scottish cousins, we were inclined to acquiesce easily, if still with a touch of scepticism, in this attitude of mind. My father, on the other hand, was an investigator; nothing satisfied him but documentary evidence, and with considerable pains he traced one particular branch of the spreading tree (one might almost say grove) of Hawkinses at least up to a Geoffrey Hawkins (the Christian name still lives in the family) a parson, who held a cure of souls at Chesterton in Huntingdonshire and was ejected therefrom by order of the Long Parliament in 1641. Further particulars of a respectable but not illustrious line of clergymen, professional men, and soldiers (in the East India Company's service) need not detain us, much as they delighted my father. The result up to the time of which I am writing was that quite a clan of our Hawkinses was settled in this little town; immediate descendants of one Major Henry Hawkins of Lawrence End, a country house of which I know no more than the name, as recorded on the tombstone of my grandfather—I expect by my father's hand.

There were no less than five Hawkins households, three in the town, two close by, on the outskirts. My grandfather, Dr. Frederick, had recently died, leaving behind him a fragrant memory, for he had done great

things for his community, especially in relation to the local hospital, where his name is held in honour to this day. His elder brother was still alive and ranked as chief of the clan. This “Old Uncle John” (because we had another “Uncle John” on the distaff side) was, even to childish eyes, a remarkable man, very stout, broad, and red in the face, of a remarkable downrightness of speech. He engrossed, I think, all the public offices open to a solicitor and had a fine private practice. He also had a large family, more than one of whose members, by this time, had considerable families of their own: so that, what with them, and dutiful accretions from the other households, a festive season at the big house in Portmill Lane was a very hive of us (I am not sure that I have not stumbled on a metaphor perhaps too apt; for a good many of us had stings of one sort or another. We are not, I fear, a meek race). A charming old house it was, facing on a narrow lane, but secluded within its brick walls, with spreading lawns, big trees, and, for a crowning delight, a paddleable stream running through. Our own special house in Bancroft was not half so fine. But I liked it. To my mind Bancroft is a very fine country-town street; and you can do it quicker now by car than I went by wagonette.

Most of these many kinsfolk are lost to conscious memory, but a few of them still flit across my thoughts,

by reason (I fear) rather of their peculiarities than of their virtues. But I shall speak only of those I liked, and not of any in malice. There was Aunt A——, a spinster, already rather deaf, sharp of tongue, bustling, with a salient nose. Once she gave a terrible shock to my youthful mind. My father ate slowly and was fond of conversation, so that one day he fell behind the rest of us in disposing of his plateful of boiled beef. "For heaven's sake," cried Aunt A——, "eat your dinner, Ned, and don't jaw!" "Ned!" and "Jaw!" These things to my august and omnipotent father! But he smiled and "got on with it" as he was bidden. She often said that sort of thing to her brother, Uncle A——, but was met there by a fraternally frank behest to go to hell, for Uncle A—— was famous for his "language." I don't think that he actually said worse things than girls say nowadays, but he said them so often that they became characteristic and caused us an awful but unending joy. He had been an army doctor, and had seen much service in the Crimea and in China; he was on board the *Plover* when she was sunk by the fire of the Peiho forts. But hardship and exposure brought on a collapse when he was thirty. He was paralysed all down one side. None the less he seemed always cheerful, and drove himself continually about the countryside in a high and rickety dog-cart drawn

by a succession of speedy and unreliable screws. Evidently in health or in sickness Uncle A—— knew no fear. I think that everybody loved him; and my father's professional rebukes about the oaths were very mild. And there was Cousin J——, a short man, with a broad pug-like face and a rolling gait. He and I were friends, and I used to waylay him in Bancroft, as he walked along it in the morning on his way to business. Ten or twelve years later, he gave me the first five pounds I had ever handled in one sum at one moment; the occasion was my winning an Exhibition at Balliol. But, Balliol or no Balliol, my theatrical fever was on me then, and I wanted to spend the money on Planché's *Burlesques*. Gentle paternal pressure resulted in Jowett's Translation of Plato's *Dialogues* being bought instead. Planché's *Burlesques* are very good, but the substitution was probably judicious.

At Portmill Lane there came on visits beautiful cousins of two generations, daughters or granddaughters of the house, all my seniors by much or little. One of them died only a little while ago, beautiful, gracious, and alert still at the age of ninety-six. There also, absent in the body (I do not remember ever seeing him at Hitchin) but constantly talked about, was the great man of the family, already famous at the Bar, soon to become a national figure through the

Tichborne Trial—Mr. Hawkins, Q. C. “Old Uncle John” lived long enough to sit beside his son on the Bench, and died in 1877, a patriarch of eighty-five. He was a Rugbeian, and one or more of his sons may (I don’t know one way or the other) have been at Rugby too; but he sent one to Marlborough as soon as he could—on the day the school opened, when my father and one of his brothers went there too.

In later years I have been several times to Hitchin—once to make a political speech, once to assist at a function at the hospital which my grandfather had served—and for the sake of my kindred have been received with infinite kindness and regard with stories of old days which I loved. But the Portmill Lane and Bancroft households are gone. The Hawkins invasion is now no more than matter of local legend. And—so far as I could observe on my last visit—nobody plaits straw. In my early days every other woman, going about the streets on her errands, was busily plaiting straw. Hitchin without Hawkinses and without women plaiting straw! What revolutions do occur in history and Hertfordshire!

But revolution more devastating and fatal (for, after all, Hitchin survives and does pretty well) must have been—had we of the schoolroom known it—already

levelled against old Clapton House. Wise heads were nodding and wise beards wagging; and the market value of the old house and its spacious grounds was being assessed in some house agent's office. We heard nothing of these probably lengthy preliminaries. I do not know whether the parents did. They said nothing. The news came as a thunderclap.

The school was to be moved to the country. We were to go too—of course we must. What of the house? Well, it couldn't go! What, then, of the fine old house, its pleasure grounds, wilderness, pond, and rookery? Well, the whole thing had to go. Messrs. Lion and Lizard, Builders and Contractors, took it over and "developed" it. If anybody likes to go now and inspect the site, let him. I have been content to drive by, casting only a cursory glance at the results of "development"; which seemed, on the whole, regrettable. Jamshyd could glory there no more.

These sentimental sentiments are, of course, born of later years. I do not remember that we children were in the least regretful. We didn't care if they pulled down an old house—why should we? We were considerably excited and curious; children love novelty above most things—and hadn't we lived a lifetime at Clapton already? How little of that life remains living now these meagre pages bear witness. But scant as they

are, I have tried to keep them true—that is, I have tried to look through the eyes I had then, not through the eyes I had later or have now.

But have I succeeded? To write truly about childhood seems to me one of the most difficult things in the world. Kenneth Grahame (I have the honour to be his cousin) is generally allowed, by critical and popular opinion, to have come near to it. His two outstanding books are surely classics. But even here the picture is softened, the traits selected. Perhaps I was not a favourable specimen. For I remember in myself greed (great greed!), quarrelsomeness, and that passionate self-assertion that used to make one hate one's dearest, and go away to sob in solitude after being denied or snubbed publicly. Delicate wounded feelings? Rather I fear it was in me just *not having won*. Or so—dimly—my infant psychology seems to emerge to my regretful vision. Of course, when I grew up, I got rid of all that sort of thing. Oh, yes!—as the Man in Black says, in Borrow.

For not winning disturbs even grown-up people sometimes—just as winning consoles a human being of any age for much travail and pain. Once—at Clapton House, mentioned here for positively the last time—we gave a “juvenile party.” Among our invited guests were two brothers, A and B. Only one came—

it was B—but he came resplendent in a white waistcoat, the first such garment that we had seen. We admired it; but then our gaze fell upon the thumb of his right hand, which was heavily bandaged. “Yes,” said B, answering our inquiring glances with a victorious smile. “I bagged A’s waistcoat, and he bit my thumb. Mater sent him to bed and let me come.”

I cannot settle the merits of the case, but it seems to have its significance.

## II

### LEATHERHEAD—AND MY FATHER

MY FIRST vision of Leatherhead is of a small boy in a blue linen suit (my habitual wear at the time) trampling and hacking his way through a large patch of Jerusalem artichokes. They rose high above his head, and to him they were paynims against whom he waged his crusade and brandished his stick joyously. It was a licensed crusade, for the artichokes had to be removed anyhow. The ground on which they grew was destined to become sleek lawns and, thus transformed, to adorn the approach to the new buildings of St. John's School, facing the road between Leatherhead and Epsom.

This picture of the little boy and the artichokes shows that things were very much in the raw at the new St. John's when we took up our abode there. The buildings themselves were finished, or nearly so, but the grounds were still a chaos. It took much time to evolve order and decency in them. The attendant difficulties did not prevent my mother from being pleased with the move, because now she had her own

house, in a separate wing, with no intruding masters and invading boys: also she saw prospects of more society. My brother had gone to a boarding-school by now, and so was comparatively little interested, in the matter. Joan and I were expectant, interested, and not unhappy.

But my father frankly hated the whole business, and took little pains to conceal his feelings. The house was ill-built and draughty—he promptly and indeed fiercely boarded up two large windows, one in the drawing-room, one in his study; there was no stable for the horse or coachhouse for the wagonette; and so on. But all these small grievances and the acuteness with which he felt them were merely symptoms—as my mother plainly stated—of his real sorrow. He was uprooted from his beloved London; he was sent into exile. That was his real sorrow.

I was a pupil in the school now, and so continued for about four years. But I do not find much to say about that side of my life. I was a “day boy,” and so rather remote from the real life of the school, as “day boys” are apt to be when they form a small minority in a school composed almost wholly of boarders. And I was not, I think, very popular. I suffered again under the suspicion of favouritism, and justly, I fear, in the sense that the help my father gave me in

my work out of school hours was necessarily reflected in school hours, and my rapid upward progress was naturally resented. And I dare say that the masters too, who were often guests at our meals, were a little bit too kind to me. In school hours my father himself made no distinction whatever. But I did feel myself rather isolated and rather on the defensive.

The real importance to me of those years was my gradually growing and—if I do not deceive myself—rather precocious apprehension of the intellectual atmosphere in which my father and his chosen friends lived. It was politically Liberal and theologically Broad. In politics Mr. Gladstone could do no wrong (this held good up to the Home Rule “split”), but in theological and ecclesiastical affairs they were nearer to the Quaker Bright than to the High Churchman Gladstone. And they were probably what is now called Erastian—though that term did not reach my youthful ears. Within the Church their leaders were Robertson of Brighton (my father spent the first ten years of his scholastic life as a master at Brighton College), Edwin Abbott, and Llewelyn Davies; these names were familiar to me by the time I was thirteen.

Broad Churchmen, and what are now called Modernists, are between two fires—from Authoritarians and from Rationalists. They are open to the criticism

that they accept what suits them and discard what does not; and also to the criticism that while rejecting what seems to them impossible or repugnant, they accept what seems possible and is acceptable, though the actual evidence for the latter is no better than that which supports the former. Their attitude is, in fact, open to both these objections in some degree, though it is fair to reply that less evidence is needed to convince us that Christ (or one of His Apostles) did a normal act, or uttered words which at once commend themselves to our moral sense, than that He performed an act which is impossible in our ordinary experience, or preached a doctrine which, but for such commanding authority, we should find repugnant to our reason or our feelings.

However these matters may stand, it was in the Broad Church atmosphere that I passed my youth and adolescence. In the pulpit my father never questioned any doctrine of the Church or any matter of Scripture, though he certainly abstained from stressing some of them. But he belonged for many years to a small dining club of Broad Church clergymen, and, as a young man, I was sometimes allowed to join the dinner when, in due rotation, it took place at our house. There conversation took a turn more free than would have become the pulpit. And, whatever the merits or

demerits of their religious opinions, those friends of my father's showed themselves men of fine mind and spirit, and I should be ungrateful (and false to truth) if I did not record my obligation to such men as Harry Jones, Bradley Alford, and Brooke Lambert, the three to whom, I think, my father felt himself most closely bound. And, if the orthodox could charge them with building more on the life of Christ than on the problems of His nature and His death, at all events they showed that they did believe in His life by the manner in which they lived their own—*servi servorum Dei*.

But "shop" was a minor part of the talk. They were broad men as well as Broad Churchmen. Harry Jones was a fisherman and a good shot; my father had many precious holidays at his country house, Barton Mere in Suffolk. He wrote an excellent set of *Holiday Papers*. Alford was an enthusiastic Hellenist and a traveller in the parts of Greece and the Isles; long after, he and Mrs. Alford gave me "wrinkles" when I was writing a story with its scene laid in a Greek island; as I had never been to one, their information was valuable. And Brooke Lambert—a bit of a dandy and—well, I suppose, a bit naughty! After church—on the first Sunday that he preached in the parish church as Vicar of Greenwich—"I stuck a flower in my button-hole and a cigar in my mouth, and walked down the

street—to show 'em I wasn't *only* a parson!" One can—or mustn't one?—imagine Pio Nono doing something like the same thing. Lambert was a delightful man, full of kindness and humour.

I began my political education on the *Times* and the *Spectator*. The latter was, more than any other paper, my father's oracle, and so it became mine. I read it every week from the age of about twelve, I think; when I went to Marlborough my father used to send it to me regularly, and he went on doing the same while I was at Oxford. For at least ten years, then, I studied it, and I came to know pretty well—or so I flattered myself—what it would say on any subject; and no doubt it supplied the material for most of my oratorical efforts at school and university. The *Times*, too, I studied diligently for information—our views were by no means always in harmony—and I kept up so well with political matters that when I went in for a Foundation Scholarship at Marlborough I was the only boy who—in reply to a question in the "General Paper"—was able to write out correctly the name of every member of the then Cabinet, together with the office which he held. For many periods of my later life I should certainly not have got "full marks" for my answer to a similar question.

Thus, then, by constant companionship and by a

community of intellectual interests which he sedulously fostered, there began the friendship between my father and me which lasted till his death. It had to bear some strains—first the small but unavoidable ones due to necessary parental authority on the one side, and boyish escapades and indiscretions on the other—later some more serious, due to acute political divergencies of opinion (of which, however, he would have made little had they not seemed to him to involve moral issues) and to his consciousness (which I divined, though he never gave direct expression to it) that I was drifting away gradually from things which he held vital in matters of religion. But owing to his great love and forbearance the tie between us was never broken—nor even frayed.

Presently he settled down at Leatherhead and made friends who were greatly valued by him—notably Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Clark of Michaelham Hall (of which house I too have very pleasant memories), and Mr. Abraham Dixon, who provided him with his beloved shooting, and also insisted on defraying the expense of printing a volume of his sermons. My father liked the latter tribute of friendship, but I think that he liked the former better still! Yet he did not cease to pine for London, for “men to talk to,” as he would say, and as time went by he seemed to weary of schoolmastering,

of which he had certainly had a pretty stiff dose. And I think that he felt that something was expected of him that he could not give. He governed the school admirably, but he had not the impulse or the gifts to make it larger than it was. The great and most successful expansion of St. John's School which has taken place under his successors (in pursuance, of course, of the policy of the Governing Body) could not, I think, have come to pass under him. He had no personal ambition and no "push." So it was a joyful day when the offer of the incumbency of St. Bride, Fleet Street, came from the Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey, in whose gift the living is.

As Vicar of St. Bride's he entered on a new and (save for the sorrow of my mother's death) a very happy life, busily occupied with professional and other public work, yet with leisure to see his friends, to frequent the Savile Club, of which he was very fond, and with a house which he made a centre and focus of family life—a house which was my own home for nearly twenty years, during the greater part of which he and I lived together by ourselves, save for his faithful and attached servants. St. Bride's Vicarage is, so to say, the background of a large part of my life. It would not be to the purpose of these notes to describe his life there in detail. It is enough to say—what

many still remember—that he made for himself a very distinct place in the City, and earned the esteem and affection of men of all religious denominations, and of men of none. And he was happy and content until the shadow of his last long illness fell upon him, and its ever-deepening gloom finally hid from him the very world he was living in and all that he held most dear in it. Happily he suffered no bodily pain. He died peacefully one Monday morning in February, 1906, having been up and about till seven o'clock the evening before, and even smoking the cigarettes of which he was so fond.

I will venture to end this poor tribute by transcribing some of what I wrote about him in a private record three days after his death—"For some time it had seemed best that he should go, yet his going hurts; the absence of his familiar presence, of his very physical presence (his face changed in nothing in spite of his mental failing) hurts. We were great friends and comrades, yet, boy or man, I was afraid of him in my sins. In the years I knew him, I don't think that he ever did what he knew to be wrong, save in being quick-tempered, and in that he conquered himself and mellowed absolutely. Yet he loved and enjoyed life; he was very fond of women's society, and kept his attraction for them and his courtly manner. He

had great manners. In those last sad days, when he knew me not, he used to thank me for the least courtesy with "You're very good to me, sir." He had loved his father very much and said that he was a great gentleman. So was mine—and a good man; charitable, yet not a dupe; very economical, yet splendidly liberal; handsome, easy and eager in talk, a great lover of his friends. A long, honourable, happy life; a good name and memory. *Vale!*

In the year 1894 I had the high honour of receiving a letter from Robert Louis Stevenson about my story, *The Prisoner of Zenda*. With it came a note to say that it had been found on his writing-table after his death. If I insert it here, it is not only—nor indeed chiefly—for its generous commendation and encouragement to me, but also and more because of its reference to my father:

*Dictated*

"VAILIMA,

*Oct. 9th, 1894.*

ANTHONY HOPE, ESQRE.

DEAR SIR,

Will you allow me to congratulate you on your very spirited and gallant little book *The Prisoner of Zenda*. I am aware that I am addressing a pseudonym. But if report informs me correctly the *Hope* ought to be

Hawkins. Are you any relation to an old acquaintance of mine, of whom I retain a most agreeable and bracing memory, a parson—or for literary purposes I may say *the* parson—in London? If you are his son, I am a hereditary acquaintance, and my cousin, who lives with me here, is your old school-fellow.

These points will need clearing up. Go on with more books as good as *The Prisoner of Zenda*, and believe me to be,

Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.”

It was, alas, too late to clear up the points. The pen, so vivid, so lucid, so serene, had fallen for ever from the hand of the Master. But it was pleasant to find that the Vicar of St. Bride's—and E. C. Hawkins of the Savile—was thus remembered by Tusitala in Samoa.

### III

#### MARLBOROUGH DAYS AND FACES

WHEN Marlborough opened its doors for the first time in August, 1843, out of just about two hundred boys who entered the new school, six bore the name of Hawkins. Three of them came from Wiltshire, men of a different clan from mine, for I can claim no relationship with south-western or western Hawkinses (none, alas, with the great Sir John!). The other three were of my kindred from Hitchin—my father, his brother Ernest, and a cousin before mentioned, one of the sons of “Old Uncle John.” The connection of the family with the school (I am always sorry that they called it a “College”—it is not a college in any proper sense of the word), thus begun, has been continued in the persons of another brother of my father’s, of my brother Geoffrey, of myself, of my sister’s sons, Keith and Anthony Feiling, and of my son: and he has a brother who, I hope, will renew it in two or three years’ time. So we may claim to be staunch and loyal Marlburians.

I went there in September, 1876, my brother having

preceded me by two years. I took my place in the succession with a heavy heart. I had never been away from home, and was very homesick. I missed sadly the companionship and the interests that I have tried to describe; and from being an individual of some importance I had become that despicable and unconsidered thing—a new boy. Being a new boy is always odious and humiliating; and it pursues a man through life—at school, at the 'Varsity, when he comes to London, raw to a new profession, even when he joins a new club or (I imagine) enters Parliament—and perhaps it overtakes him once again when he dies. It is grievous to fall from eminence, or at least a well-established position, in one sphere to become a raw recruit who does not even know his drill in another.

Moreover, Marlborough offered no bed of roses to her children in those days. I am loath to call her *dura noverca*, but I certainly may not call her *alma mater*. A Spartan mother let us call her. All the food we got was bread-and-scrape at 8.30 (after chapel at 7 and an hour's school), meat and pudding at 1.30 (all right, if the meat was !), bread-and-scrape at 6.30, two "college biscuits" (name of opprobrium!) and a very small chunk of cheese at 9 o'clock after chapel. Those who had small private means went hungry often. Fortunately the well-endowed never condescended to the

college biscuits, and those despised viands could be gathered together in fair quantities by the paupers, crumbs from the rich man's table; soaked in a cup of tea—and it did generally run to that, even if the tea did come in the form, and with something of the taste, of a brick, they could be negotiated. The wealthy fared well, with sumptuous "brews" in afternoon and evening. But it was long before I could count myself one of these. And the cold! And the impossibility of getting near a fire, ringed round ten deep by superior beings! Enough of those woes! But, what with bodily, and what with spiritual, suffering I did not get really reconciled to Marlborough till I had been there for two years; after which I proceeded to enjoy myself enormously. It was ungrateful of me not to be happy before, for I was very well treated. My brother smoothed many rough places for me, and I received favourable notice from several of the Gods on High.

Not among my particular patrons, but unquestionably the greatest of the gods at Marlborough during my time were Allan Steel and Harry Vassall, names famous wherever men talk cricket and football history, the one certainly among the greatest cricketers who ever lived, and the other the pioneer of modern Rugby football. But in my first days Vassall's greatness was only dawning, whereas Steel was already—even in his

Marlborough lifetime—of a greatness almost legendary. As he passed by “the seats” (now no more), always with a pleasant smile, and no more swagger than was inevitable, boys would tell how, when W. G. himself came to the school to play for a visiting club, Steel clean bowled him in his first over for the score of one! And in the evening (so the story ran) “Bam,” our famous choirmaster and organist, himself an enthusiast at all games, so wrought that a well-known hymn was sung in chapel, which contains the line:

The scanty triumphs Grace has won.

And it was sung, too—with a vengeance.

With such laurels (whether legendary or not) encircling his brow, it is small wonder that Steel was indifferent to ordinary ambitions. He had plenty of ability, as he proved in a career at the Bar unhappily too short for full fruition, but at school, having achieved the moderate elevation of the Middle Fifth, he elected to stay there, the honoured favourite of a master who was stern as Fate—and twice as speedy—to every other boy. Rules were broken for him—the rule of superannuation, I think—the rule that the Captain of the Eleven must be in the Sixth, I am sure. And for my part I think that this was quite right. To be a supreme artist in any worthy thing is to be very

exceptional, and surely then deserves exceptional treatment. I do not sniff at greatness in games (as some people do who are not great, nor even good, at anything). I tried very hard and longingly myself, but, alas, was never more than—say—a decent third class. It was a gleam of brightness across the somewhat dark sky of my first term when, playing in Lower House match at football and having made a run as three quarters, I heard Steel's veritable voice say, "Well run! Who's that?" Not otherwise, I think, would an Athenian boy have listened to a word of praise from a victor in the Olympian Games. I met Steel last in the Pavilion at Lord's and, transported back over the vanished years, shook his hand with a thrill.

Time passed by, and I myself began to climb the steep ascent to a place in the hierarchy. I shall scout modesty (which indeed is incongruous in an autobiographer) and make the most of my greatness, for I was destined never to see the like of it again. I got into the Sixth after two years—at the age of fifteen, too soon for my "spiritual health" (as Mr. Shaw says that his renown is too great for his); I won scholarships which enabled me to live free of school fees; ultimately I rose to be fourth in the school, though I must add that there was a great gulf between the first three and the fourth. I won a good many school prizes. On the ath-

letic side, I had to my credit the hundred yards and the quarter-mile, and two years in the Fifteen. I was also President of the Debating Society, and of the Penny Reading Committee, a member of the Supreme Five who ruled over all sports with despotic sway, and one of the Editors of *The Marlburian*.

Contra account—an absolute duffer at cricket, no good at fives or gymnasium (rackets I could not afford), and a very poor scholar in any exact sense of that word.

Still, in spite of these very definite limitations, a great man. I emphasize the fact, not only to blow my own trumpet (though that is a pleasant enough diversion), but because, when public school education is under fire, as it constantly is nowadays, it is worth while to remind people what an opportunity a big public school offers for a boy to develop himself and his faculties all round. It is not true that it is games, games, games, and nothing else. And—on the other side—it is not true that the training is only in moral character, though it is a good one in that regard. A boy may learn too the elements of administration and leadership—even of politics and journalism, to press my case to its extreme. These things the best private education cannot give, and they must be set against any drawbacks there may be. And in my judgment the drawbacks are exaggerated. For the normal boy a public

school is good. For a hot-house plant or an erratic genius it is not, because he is miserable, and it is not good for boys to be miserable—for more than a reasonable term of purgatory, at all events. **R 254129**

And, to launch a paradox—which in its correct meaning is a thing contrary to common opinion but true according to exact knowledge—intellect is respected at a public school. But it has to be outstanding intellect, not laborious mediocrity, which often does quite well in after life. But for real intellect boys have an amazed respect; it is to them a trifle uncanny but intensely enviable. In my latter days at Marlborough we all took off our caps to our Senior Prefect. At games he was respectable and courageous, though not eminent; but in work he could do everything better than any of us could do anything. And with such glorious ease! It seemed a kind of prestidigitation. Mathematics, classics, science, all came alike to him. I think that the small boys believed that he controlled the weather, because he was put in charge of the barometer in the porch of old "C" House! Professor H. L. Callendar, F. R. S., will, I hope, forgive me these references to his youth. The mere mention of his name vindicates my claim that boys are good judges of brains.

Old "C" House (Who, I wonder, was the person who preferred order to picturesqueness in naming

the “in-college houses” A, B, and C—thus rendering any romantic feelings about them so much harder, if not to feel, at all events to transmit to others?) was the *fons et origo* of the school. Readers—and they have been many—of my friend Stanley Weyman’s *Castle Inn* know it; and perhaps, since motoring came in, travellers on the Great West Road give it a glance—not more, I expect: it’s very hard to get them to stop for anything that is not imperatively scheduled in the guide book. It was, according to story, a manor house of the great family of the Seymours—digression tempts me sorely here—the Lord Protector, Sir Edward, and the “Proud Duke”—but I must refrain—which had declined to the status of an inn, and then had passed into the possession of the Ailesburys, lords of Savernake Forest, from whom the founders of the school acquired it, and gave to it for companions two model prisons (Houses B and A) and two vast barns (Big School and Dining Hall)—all of which still stand to witness if I lie! But “C” House is worthy of the Seymours. I picture the Adderly Library as the banquet hall—it could well seat a hundred. Above, in the drawing-room (?), forty boys slept spaciously. Above again, in an attic, twenty-seven lay uncrowded—I was one of them. And these rooms looked—and look—on a garden of stately charm. It is matter of cold fact

—of course it is, I would not doubt it for the world—that a duel to the death had been fought on the bowling-green (to be seen from the window of my house classroom), and that once a year a ghostly coach drove up to the garden entrance, grinding on the gravel and sounding a phantom blast on its “yard of tin.” Everybody knew somebody who had heard this thing, and that is about as near as you can generally get in a ghost story.

My going to Marlborough coincided with the beginning of G.C. Bell’s reign there; we were new boys together, as he (an old friend of my father’s) would often say to me. He held sway there for long years—probably too long; but he did great things for the school, and in his early days certainly governed well, so far as we boys could judge. He was not an impressive and imposing figure such as his predecessor Farrar had been, but he had a simple and homely dignity, and a pleasant, very dry, sometimes sarcastic humour. He ruled his Sixth Form mainly through this latter endowment, bringing up his reserves of authority only when he met with plain recalcitrancy or *hubris*—a favourite word of his. I was, I am afraid, a bit of what sailors call a sea-lawyer, and in dealing with some masters could get my own way, while keeping just within the letter of the law and thus escaping pen-

alties. Such arts did not avail with Bell; they came within the meaning of *hubris*. For example—when lawn tennis came into vogue among some of us, as a substitute for cricket or a supplement to it, we provided ourselves with weird, hideous, many-coloured hats of felt, each boy vying with each in monstrousness of headgear. The plea advanced was that the school caps gave no shade to the eyes, and the orthodox straw hats (now called “boaters” by the vulgar) fell off on slight provocation. The Master, disliking the monstrosities, issued a decree that only the recognised school and house colours should be worn; whereupon I, lawyering, caused to be constructed for myself a huge cap, with a mighty spreading brim, in my house colours of black and red. I was within the letter of his decree, for he had mentioned colours but had said nothing about shapes. It wouldn’t do. It was *hubris*. I wore that cap only once.

Even when the dire offence of *hubris* was not in question, he could be disconcerting. Once I went in for the poetry prize (it had a name; but I have forgotten it). The subject for the poets was “The Cruise of the *Challenger*.” I am afraid that I did not read up the subject with much diligence. I trusted in the main to my natural poetic gifts—which didn’t and don’t exist. The poetry prize that year was announced to

be "Not Awarded." The Master said nothing to me, and I nothing to him, for two or three weeks. Then one morning, after we had done some other business together, he suddenly said, "Would you like to hear about the poetry prize?" "Thank you, sir," said I. "Only two poems were sent in. One was very feeble and the other very grotesque. Do you care to know which yours was?" "No, thank you, sir," said I, and left the presence with my feelings decidedly hurt. I have not written any poetry since—well, except four lines in *The Dolly Dialogues*. However, Henry Newbolt told me that in one of the four I had got a very good caesura. This was accidental, but I was glad to hear it all the same.

But I beat the Master once—in this wise. For a year I had shared with R. F. Cholmeley, one of my best friends, a large "double" study in the "Alley." The next year he became head of his house—in B House—and had to move to that less desirable building. The Master directed me to find a new partner. I did not succeed in this quest; in fact I took care not to, much preferring to have the study to myself. The Master bestirred himself and presented me with suggestion after suggestion of suitable partners. Fully and candidly accepting—in principle—the view that I must take a partner, I demurred to each individual

suggested; either I did not get on with him, or he did not like me. Might I have a few days more in which to find a partner both welcome and willing? The weeks, nay, the terms slipped by. I did not find the welcome and willing partner, and the Master was gravelled for new suggestions. He gave it up; I remained in undisturbed and solitary possession of the study. This victory consoled me for my little upsets over the black-and-red cap and the prize poem.

In spite of these small differences I felt friendliness for the Master then, and feel affection now for his memory. For Mrs. Bell ("Libby" the Master called her, and so did we—in private) I had nothing less than devotion, and I think that all of us felt the same. Her manner with the big boys was perfection just because she treated them as men—not as her husband's pupils, but as her and his guests, for the nonce just on the same footing as other guests. They were "Mr. Jones" or "Mr. Smith." Only—I was "Anthony" by virtue of the family friendship. And she was full of kindness, humour, and understanding.

There were some notable men among the assistant-masters of my day. W. M. Furneaux, powerful in body, rugged in face, an eloquent preacher, capable of stirring in us moral aspirations to which we were generally strangers; J. S. Thomas, the great Bursar, who (as we

understood) saved the school from financial ruin and, when he had done it, gave us, in a spirit of serene achievement, porridge or an egg every other day for breakfast; A. H. Beesly, brother of the Positivist leader, himself a man of great taste and some accomplishment in literature, but respected by us more for his athletic achievements and interests. Their record belongs more to the history of Marlborough than to these personal notes; my relations with them were "correct" (as diplomatists and journalists say) rather than intimate. Then there were the "Characters"; being a "character" is generally but a small part of a man's real character, yet a part fatally vivid to boyhood's apprehension and memory. Shall I mention them—veiled in nicknames recognizable only to the initiated? Prunk, who was fated to teach, irascibly, mathematics to me and other young duffers in the Natural History Museum, but whose real passion was bugs and beetles; our blunders constantly threatened a breaking, by his exasperated fist, of the cases which contained his specimens, fortunately dead and securely pinned; Stinks—generic name for a science master, in those days anyhow—a dear man of whom we were all very fond, but a prey to traps laid by malicious boys which led him into saying what he had never meant to say—(I wish I could tell one or two of the stories!). He

had also, in reading lessons in chapel, an imperfect management of voice-production, and once encouraged unsuccessful athletes, and almost equalled the happy result of the race in *Alice in Wonderland*, by rendering the Apostle Paul's words as, "Those that run in a race run. All but one receiveth the prize."

And Fungi, the doctor—a white-haired man, to all appearance a guileless old gentleman, yet skilled in dealing with malingeringers. A very stiff dose of very nasty cough mixture was a preliminary to any more elaborate examination of the case. And this with the utmost outward sympathy and benevolence! One gained nothing by going to Fungi unless one happened to be really ill; a disappointing man from our point of view, but boys respect a worthy antagonist.

My own friend and foe, the nearest approach to an intimate that I had among the masters, was M. H. Gould; an Old Marlburian, in his time a Scholar of Trinity and President of the Union at Oxford. I was in his form my first term, and he increased my general unhappiness by constantly rallying me on certain peculiarities of pronunciation which clung (and, I think, still cling) to me as a result of the conflicting influences of a Scotch mother and a Lincolnshire nurse. His own pronunciation was not above criticism, but I was not in a position to hit back. He also had an

unholy predilection for setting us to draw maps, and of all the things that I have done badly in this life my drawing of maps is the worst. So my liking for him was a plant of slow growth, and flowered later on in the dusty arena of the Debating Society. He was a good speaker, slow and precise in delivery, but acute and epigrammatic; and he was a great Tory, though his name was Marius. Terrible hay he would make of my Radical orations; but a word of good-natured praise when the fray was over inclined my heart towards him. And he used to take me out riding (though I rode pretty nearly as badly as I drew maps), and ask me to tea, and tell me about his old battles at the Union, naming allies or opponents who had been famous there (Some continued being famous, others did not, as is the way with Oxford reputations), and thereby inflaming my political ambitions. It was largely due to Marius Gould that I went up to Oxford fully determined to cut a figure at the Union if I could. He survived at Marlborough long enough to be housemaster to my nephews, and finally settled in London, where from time to time we encountered one another in great amity.

Though I was, during my last two years at Marlborough, as I have already said, a very busy man, and was thus thrown into contact with all sorts and conditions of schoolfellows, making many friends and

acquaintances, I lived mainly with a little circle of intimates. One of them I have mentioned already, R. F. Cholmeley; he is, happily, still flourishing, an important man in educational affairs, and meeting the labours and calls of life with the cheerful energy and ironic humour that he showed at school. Death has claimed the rest, and took them all too soon. Some words of grateful, pleasant, and in some respects amused remembrance is due to them from me. They need not be sad ones, for the sorrow is over-past, and the joy of recollection remains.

Arthur Llewelyn Davies, member of a distinguished family, tall, very handsome, a good scholar, an adept at many games—cricket, football, fives, lawn tennis—was a very conspicuous figure in the school. He was admired by everybody, and loved by those to whom he gave his friendship. But to say that he either sought or achieved general popularity would be to sin against the truth. Arthur did not suffer fools gladly; and he thought that there were a great many fools, concerning whom God had given him the faculty, and perhaps assigned to him the duty, of expressing his opinion incisively. In fact, he was richly intolerant, and to hear him on the subject of somebody or something that he disapproved of was what the vulgar term “a treat.” It befell one day that the wife of a certain master had a

baby. There was really no reason why the Reverend X and his wife should not have a baby; he was no more than middle-aged, and she several years his junior, and it must be presumed that they were living in lawful wedlock. But the occurrence filled Arthur with indignation. How—he demanded with vigorous rhetorical adjuncts—were the Sixth to keep up a high tone of morality if the masters did things like that? There was no appeasing him; the thing was plainly indecent. He lived to become himself the most perfect of fathers, and partner in a marriage so perfect that one was tempted to see in the fate that ended it the envy of the gods. Arthur had mellowed a good deal before then, but never to the regrettable extent of tolerating a plain fool. And I like best to remember him when his indignation was in its full youthful flood, expressing, as it did, his own conscious and impatient powers.

E. W. Coghlan—"Cog" he was to his intimates—was my close friend through Marlborough and Oxford days, and afterwards in London until his health obliged him to emigrate to Egypt, where he became a judge; not even that favouring climate enabled him to survive beyond early middle age. He was a stocky, sturdily built fellow, with sandy hair, of Irish family, and of a critical and rebellious temper. He would yield willing obedience to authority only when he liked and admired

the man in whom it was vested; mere authority as such was repugnant to him, and so there were some stormy passages in his school career; even his friendships did not entirely escape squalls. But he had one of the acutest minds I have known, and took his first in Greats on less—and less methodical—reading than I had thought possible, and in spite (I feel sure of it) of some very heterodox views of the warriors, statesmen, and philosophers with whose deeds or systems we were required to acquaint ourselves. He loved argument above all things, and conducted it with a ferocious and often profane vigour; in Egypt, I was told, he argued even with Lord Cromer, which was like disputing the Order of the Universe, and did not probably hasten his advancement. He cared nothing about that; with some good friends and some good quarrels he was quite happy, and he would, I think, have suspected something wrong in himself had he achieved high place and great success. His audacity, his gaiety, and the eager rush of his thoughts made his company a delight that I have never ceased to miss.

Reggie Farrar (the last name on this little roll of school friendships), son of the distinguished Archdeacon and Dean, was a rebel too, but of rather a different colour. He cared little for criticising or attacking other people, but he cared intensely for his own

enthusiasms, and stuck at nothing in the pursuit of them. Thus he too came into conflict with authority pretty often, was something of an Ishmaelite, and had to put up with a lot of ridicule. He was so easy to "draw"—what boy could resist "drawing" him? But he was liked for his affectionateness and his generous admiration of his friends, and he was admired for his absolute fearlessness, a quality which he proved so splendidly in later life. After some years of private practice as a doctor, he entered Government medical service; he accepted eagerly missions to fight malaria in west Africa, plague in China, and finally typhus (I think it was that, but my memory may be at fault) in Russia. I lunched with him at the Savage Club just before he started on this last expedition—one of obvious risk, but he was full of gaiety, of enthusiasm about the hunting he had been having, and the private theatricals which he had just been getting up—full of the joy of life. I did not see him again. In Russia he gave for his work the life he loved—a true soldier of science and a very fine fellow.

Marlborough had given me a good measure of success, and much happiness in my later years there. I had my natural regrets, but I was very glad not to be a schoolboy any more. But I was not particularly glad to be going up to Oxford. The last twelve months had

seen the abandonment of a cherished ambition, fed by visits to the play in the holidays and by fancied and flattering triumphs in amateur theatricals. I would be an actor! As might be expected (at all events in those days) my father demurred strongly. He had much to say for his side of the case, I nothing for mine. Authority apart, I was out-argued, and a final "stopper" was put on my argument, such as it was, by my success in winning an Exhibition at Balliol, a better showing than Bell had expected of me. So I put the ambition behind me, and resolved never to act again—I could not be moderate, so I must be a total abstainer! That resolution I have kept up to now, and I am not likely to be tempted to break it. But the ambition, abandoned though it was, still coloured my thoughts, and made Oxford (in spite of the lure of the Union) seem in prospect rather like going on to another school; whereas the ambition, if gratified, would have swept me straight into a wonderful and glowing life. Looking back, I doubt whether my mood about going up to Oxford would not be best described as one of manful resignation. "I sighed as an artist, I obeyed as a son." I could nearly echo Gibbon's famous utterance about his thwarted love-affair.

## IV

### OXFORD—AND BALLIOL UNDER JOWETT

I WENT up to Oxford in October, 1881, being then about eighteen and a half years old, and a broader scene of life presented itself to my eyes. Before I try to sketch some of its features and some of its figures, let me look for a moment at myself and my situation—for, after all, a man writing about his life cannot leave himself out, however much aware he may be of the smallness of the part he plays in the eyes of others. And since I am conscious of having changed radically—I think, indeed, in almost every respect—from what I was then, I am perhaps capable of giving a fairly impartial view of my former, and now very remote, self.

What then were my equipment and my situation? My brains were above the average; no Balliol man can admit that the brains of a Balliol Exhibitioner and Scholar (I was promoted to Scholar during my first term, thereby becoming a member of the Foundation—I attached a sentimental value to that—and entitled to

ten pounds more per annum) are not above the average merely because, in a particular case, they happen to be his own brains; but they were not of a commanding order, and least of all so in a scholarly regard; I had no divine gift for classical languages. Consequently I had to be laborious. The necessity soon bred a habit and ceased to be irksome, though it was sometimes difficult to fit in with other pursuits and with social pleasures. In respect to these latter I was limited in another way. My means were narrow—I had £80 from my scholarship, £40 from a “leaving Exhibition” from Marlborough, and £40 of my own, the interest of a legacy benevolently left to me by one of my god-parents. My father made up the annual income to £200. It was enough with care, but admitted of few luxuries (though it was made to admit of plenty of tobacco!) and did not allow of expensive recreations or of much hospitality. I could not live on equal terms with the rich men—rather a loss, for many of them were clever men and had, from their circumstances, a broader outlook on life than it had been possible for me to acquire. But, after all, the majority of men were in much the same, or little better, case than I was, and I found among them plenty of good friends and interesting companions. And neither they nor I suffered the smallest stigma or social disadvantage. Oxford was—and, so far as my

observation goes, still is—in fact the most truly democratic place of all that I know in the Kingdom. In the end the only things that really count there are what you are and what you can do. I hope—and have no reason to doubt—that the other Universities are the same.

For the rest, I was a very ardent and intolerant politician, and took avidly not only to the Union, but to the college debating societies; for the Union on Thursday nights, and the college societies on Saturday I almost always made time. I was a great Radical and (I regret to say) signified the same by often sporting a red tie and by wearing my hair, which I then possessed in considerable quantities (*Quantum mutatus ab illo!*), rather long. These habits were not generally popular, and were only forgiven to me by reason of my respectable athletic qualifications. Respectable, but, alas, not brilliant, as it turned out in the keener and wider competition of Oxford. I played for four years in a very good balliol Football XV—the great Alan Rotherham was our shining star, and to play three-quarters behind him was an education; I even played for the Varsity in “A” (or scratch) teams once or twice; but there was an end of it. So it was in running. I never achieved more than the Freshmen’s hundred yards, and that only by the chivalry of my friend Bruce Williamson, who

was technically qualified to compete, but, having already achieved the infinitely higher distinction of a "Blue," left the field open to another Balliol man. The truth is that I was profoundly disappointed with myself at Oxford in athletic matters. Success at Marlborough had bred in me overweening hopes—visions of a football "Blue," visions of a "Blue" for the quarter-mile, which was my best distance. Visions of a "Double Blue!" Well, it was very disappointing; and even now I am not rid of a wistful regret.

And now I—I myself—am going to try to slip into the background, or at least to appear only in the company of my betters; talking primarily about them, and about myself only by necessary reference and mainly as an onlooker—the sort of onlooker that I have tried to sketch—or, if you will, as a subordinate actor, playing "opposite to" (in the theatre slang) the chief performer. What I can write in this way will be but jottings, in no order chronological or other; it will be just an attempt to give some idea of the Oxford of those days, and in particular of Balliol under Jowett. Many abler pens—well, you know the *cliché*, and it may be taken as written. I admit the force of it in this case; where remarkable men are concerned, it seems to me that any first-hand impression of an observer who, if

not extraordinarily intelligent, was at least keenly interested, may have its own value. And the impressions, for what they are worth, shall be at first-hand; I don't mean to tell old legends and anecdotes, but only what I saw with my own eyes, heard with my own ears, or felt for myself. Nor are they mostly "first impressions." I was nearly five years at Oxford, and, although the academic year is really only half a year, there was time to let what I saw "sink in," arrange itself, and become something fairly coherent. But, of course, my view was purely personal, necessarily incomplete, not probably, according to better authorities, always right. But it was what I saw and was able to see.

Whatever may be the state of affairs now—I express no opinion about it—few men who knew Oxford in the first half of the 'eighties would dispute the hegemony of Balliol in intellectual matters; even the colleges who hardily disputed it had themselves received—may I say?—colonists from Balliol who had much voice in their government. (Balliol herself has always been a Free Trader in brains, exporting her superfluity, not hesitating to import when she had not, at the moment, the precise article she needed.) This predominance was due mainly to the remarkable man who then presided over the college. Many have written about him, some

in malice, more in affection and admiration. All I can do is to write down just what he seemed to one undergraduate who, though not a favoured or intimate pupil, came a good deal in contact with him. The sketch I attempt is not painted all in one colour.

For a considerable part of the time that I was up, the Master was Vice-Chancellor, and it was common to see him promenading along the Broad with the official silver "poker" borne in front of him. Somehow he gave the effect of tacking, for he walked with one shoulder a little advanced before the other. He wore the plain black gown of a Master of Arts, for, though Regius Professor of Greek and Head of a House, he held no higher degree in his own University. Under his gown he was clad—as always—in a black swallow-tail coat, a black waistcoat cut very open, with a white bow-tie of the old-fashioned, pre-dogcollar clerical type; in the daytime his trousers would be of dark grey—and changing for dinner would obviously be for him a simple task. The upper part of his head and his brow were very fine; the lower part of the face was not what would generally be called strong in shape; yet it did not seem weak on him. It was said—not without some justice—that he bore a likeness to Queen Victoria. When I saw the Queen quite close at her second Jubilee I could trace the likeness not only in outline

but in a certain set of the features which gave a look of benevolent authority. Yet in his case there was, rather incongruously mingled with his impressiveness and dignity, a certain homely simplicity, a certain (I hope I may use the word, as I am certainly intending to use it, without disrespect)—quaintness, and this was increased by the falsetto tones of his voice. Jowett stories lose more than half their point without Jowett's voice. Here again there was an odd incongruity between the voice itself and the extraordinary decisiveness and finality of its utterances. Not Mr. Gladstone himself could be more authoritative. But Mr. Gladstone spoke like the bass of a cathedral organ—he boomed his Yes or No. The Master—well, in the end, he almost chirped his: yet it carried just the same. Here is an authentic and rather typical example of an official interview with the Master, which I must preface by explaining that I was at the time “eating my dinners”—a ceremony which has to be gone through for three years at the Inns of Court before a student can be called to the Bar; it was customary to get through some of this course of “eating” while one was still up at Oxford, the authorities there granting the necessary three days’ leave during term time. On this occasion it also happened that my sister was going to be married.

Thus I enter the Master's study, and this dialogue ensues:

THE MASTER: Good morning.

MYSELF: Good morning, sir. May I go to London to eat my dinners on Saturday?

THE MASTER: Yes.

MYSELF: May I stay over Monday night? My sister is to be married on Tuesday.

THE MASTER: Yes.

MYSELF: And we have a family party on Tuesday evening. May I stay over that night?

THE MASTER: No. Good morning.

That is textual. Not a single word more—and there couldn't well be a word less.

Or take a less official occasion, even if only a little less official, a breakfast party of undergraduates at the Master's. We are in the usual difficulty for conversation, till someone happily remembers that a day or two ago an attempt was made to assassinate the Emperor of Russia. The pros and cons of Tyrannicide! A good and fertile subject that ought to help us along—what with Harmodius and Aristogeiton, Judith and Holofernes, Brutus and Cassius, Charlotte Corday, and so on! It promises very well and is started with animation. But the Master does not listen long. He slaps his lips together once or twice, as was his manner when

he was not pleased, and the treble voice chirps out  
“All murderers!”

And there was an end of that!

Moreover, the treble voice could say things without using even the fewest words. Four or five of us who were reading for Greats used to write essays for the Master; the ritual was that we joined him at dessert after dinner, had a glass of sherry and a little conversation, and then read our compositions in turn. One evening Ruskin had been dining with the Master; he was staying in Oxford then, not, I think, very well nor with all his old powers, but a gracious and charming presence, with his courtly manners and his beautiful blue eyes matched generally by a big blue necktie—the match too good surely for mere accident! There was on the table—indeed there generally was—a dish of what they call French prunes, and Ruskin fell to praising the prismatic hues of the French prunes. We were delighted, of course, to hear the great man talk about anything, and did not mind for how long or in how highly coloured language he descanted on the French prunes. But the Master sat slapping his lips together, and when Ruskin had bidden us good-night and was gone, the treble voice said, “He’s generally right on moral subjects. And now the essays, please.”

Though the Master’s contribution to a conversation

sometimes had, as I have hinted, the effect of killing it, I am sure that this result was quite contrary to his own intentions. He was not himself, at any rate amongst his juniors and pupils, a fluent talker—he had no small talk, as the Duke of Wellington said of himself—but he liked and admired fluency in others. He has often been accused of being too fond of the aristocracy—to put it bluntly, of being a snob. This charge is, in my opinion, quite unjustified. No doubt he thought that a proportion of aristocracy was a good thing for the college; it certainly was; and if he also reflected that in most cases the young aristocrat's future career was likely to be of more public importance than that of the common run of men, and that therefore his education and training were of some special moment—well, that reflexion was quite reasonable. And even if he allowed himself the thought that these important careers would rebound to the credit of his beloved college, what son of that college will lift up a voice in blame? The charge of vulgar snobbishness cannot stand for a moment—he was much too big a man for that; but he did, I think, like the society of young men of great families just because they were more accustomed to society; having met, in the ordinary course of their home lives, men of importance, they were the less afraid of him, and thus they were more at ease than the other men were; they

talked more freely and assuredly, they kept the talk going. Being at their ease, they helped to set him at his ease, and, leavening the lump, to set the whole breakfast-party at its ease—an achievement of which, it must be confessed, the host himself was not capable.

The traits of which I have been speaking are not unimportant in a man who occupies the position which he did, because they not only create interest in the man and so focus attention (even if it be mingled with some amusement) on him, but they either conduce to or hinder the appreciation of weightier things, and the communication, in large matters, of his mind to the minds that look to his for their nourishment. It is, however, full time to come to the weightier things themselves.

In the exercise of discipline Jowett was, I think, wellnigh above criticism. Heads of Houses at the University are not schoolmasters, and they come to grief, or at least to partial failure, if they try to be—as more than one eminent man has found. They must govern by discretion no less than by authority, for rebellion, passive or even active, is much easier than at a school and much harder to deal with. Jowett could turn a blind eye on occasion, but his eyes were everywhere. He knew what men were doing and what they were spending; he handed every man his weekly

“battels” with his own hand every Saturday morning, after such examination of the items as he thought fit; and a man’s bills disclose many secrets. In fine, his sway was thorough, pervasive, and dominant; it might, perhaps, be called strict, but it was not pedantic or vexatious. He did not infringe on the liberty which seems so precious to Varsity men because it is so new, and is so precious to them because it is a preparation for a liberty more complete.

As a teacher and guide in philosophy, I myself (I am conscious that other men might feel differently) found him not so much inspiring as critical and corrective. He would often recall us from the mists of metaphysics in which we delightedly wandered by asking us to consider what we—and the metaphysicians—really meant and what we could really see through the fog. Nay, the “heretic” of bygone years would sometimes stay speculation by a sudden reference to the text of the Scriptures, a thing rather disconcerting to young intellects rioting in emancipation. He was probably right in administering these correctives; the philosophical air of Oxford—and not least of Balliol—in those days was highly bracing but a little foggy; the Master’s demand for definiteness did us no harm. But it did also, I think, reflect the colour of his own mind, which was critical rather than speculative.

Whatever he may have been as a philosopher, he was, beyond doubt, a great moralist. Even in this sphere he has been accused of worldliness, but this has come about, I think, through a misunderstanding. He did not make morals worldly; he sought to extend their application to the whole of life, even to things generally considered purely secular, indifferent, or even trivial—to politics and business, to the success of a career, to the management of money, to behaviour in society. Worldly topics and the conduct of this life figure largely in his sermons, and it is in his sermons that he is best studied as a moralist. His custom was to preach in chapel not more than twice a term, and it was evident that he bestowed great care on his sermons. In them he seemed able to show his own heart and to reach the hearts of others without the reserve which often seemed to affect him in private intercourse with his pupils. (He has a wonderful passage on the evils of shyness—of the sufferings it entails and the disabilities it involves—that could not have been written except by a man who knew in himself the obstinate, silly, and torturing affliction which he describes.) I often read these sermons—I who read no others and seldom hear any—for their shrewdness, their charity, their discernment of what does and what does not really matter in this life or any other, their vision of

the things we can see only in a glass darkly. And when he was deeply moved—as in his sermon on the death of Nettleship—he spoke with an august simplicity. I should like to end what I have ventured to say about a great man—and I humbly hope that I have said nothing presumptuous—by quoting a few lines from this sermon.

After describing, very simply, but with the deepest feeling, the death of his friend—and ours—in a storm on Mont Blanc, the Master goes on: “So passed out of human sight and knowledge one of the best of men and one of the greatest teachers whom we have had at Oxford during the present generation. We were willing ‘to rejoice in his light for a season.’ I do not suppose that he will be forgotten by any of his pupils. Twenty or thirty or fifty years hence the memory of him will come back to them, and they will speak of him to the Oxford of another generation. He is with God, where we too shall be—some of us in no long time—most of us are still young and have the work of life before us. There is no need to enlarge further on the circumstances of our dear friend’s end. All death is sad, but the time and manner of it do not make much difference. All death is rest and peace, deliverance from sin and sorrow—yes, and from our own selves, or from the worst part of us, that the better may remain. ‘The souls

of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no evil touch them."

To the man thus finely commemorated I owe intellectually more than to any other, and when in regard to things that belong to the mind, I say "Oxford," I mean Nettleship—yes, even more than the Master himself. He gave to me the inspiration which Jowett disciplined. He taught me to seek truth—and never to be sure I had found it—and that it was to be adumbrated, but never more than that, in the human mind—*umbrae et imagines*. From him I learnt too to look for the points in which great teachers and philosophers agree, not those in which they differ (though indeed the latter are more easily handled by examiners and examinees). I recall a lecture of his in which he (so to say) drew together the minds of Socrates and of Christ till differences of time and race, of particular views on particular questions, of Jew and Greek, vanished. It may be that the persuasive harmonizing went too far. But how much better it was, how much more true (even though not quite true) than unfertile distinctions and aggressive contrasts! But he pursued these high themes with not a trace of pose, of mystic airs, or prophetic rhapsody—just quietly and earnestly, an investigator like yourself. And in himself he was the simplest and most enjoying of men, loving music, keen

on all college affairs, merry as any one at a Bump Supper, and listening with zest to what we told him of our visits to the theatre in London and of the gods and goddesses we saw there. After someone's enthusiastic description of Kate Vaughan, he said with a serious thoughtfulness, "Yes, she must be a real swell." For all sides of life and thought he had this fine catholicity of appreciation; it gave him a correspondingly wide sympathy with men of diverse characters and interests. When his sturdy broad-hipped frame sank, at last exhausted, and his deep-set eyes closed, among the snows of Mont Blanc, a rare spirit took its flight.

On others of Jowett's lieutenants I must not dwell at length. They have left their mark cut deeply on the history of the college, and others have paid them the tribute due. Two of them became Masters; Strachan-Davidson, model of graceful and kindly courtesy, whom memory associates indissolubly with the Roman Constitution, tea, and unnumbered cigarettes; and A. L. Smith (Nobody in fact bothered to say either the "Smith" or the "Davidson"—they were "Strachan" and "A. L."), ardent in social service as well as in his work for College and University, the effective head too of our athletic activities and himself a devotee of the river; moreover, a very admirable after-dinner speaker,

a style of oratory in which Oxford, as a general rule, did not excel. Other figures pass across the memory in little pictures like slides on a magic lantern; Arnold Toynbee walking down the High, always eagerly talking to his companion; Evelyn Abbott, unable to move from his invalid's chair, but incredibly handy in its management, darting about in it from book-shelf to book-shelf, and pouncing on the volume he wanted like a cat on a mouse; Paravicini ("Paravi"), all animation and movement as he made Cicero's Letters, by his rendering of them, sound as fresh as the morning's post. These were all men of mark and individuality.

The statement, often made on ornamental occasions, that "a common spirit animates" a school, college, or other corporate institution, must generally be taken as true in a very limited sense. I would not go so far as to say that it was true of Balliol in those days, and it would have been marvellous if it had been, for the men were a very "mixed lot," coming from every, or almost every, social class, every kind of school, all parts of the country; we were more mixed, I think, than most colleges owing to our Scottish connection (which may be supposed to start from our Founders, John de Balliol and Dervorguilla his wife, a Princess of Galloway, and was fostered by the Snell Exhibitions, which have sent so many distinguished men to Balliol)

and to our West Country connection maintained through Peter Blundell's exhibitions. But the mixed lot "mixed" very well, and it would be true to say that there was a prevailing atmosphere, one that pervaded the college as a whole. It was disseminated more, I think, by the Debating Societies than by any other agency. There were at least three in my day, and they differed in character, but a good many men (including myself) belonged to all of them, and thus formed as it were bridges across social chasms. Seniority and greatest prestige belonged to the Devorguilla; it was rather "select," and the object of some jealousy, but under the guidance of such men as Edward Grey (already making wise, weighty, and entirely unrhetorical speeches), Robert Younger, and F. W. Pember, it was hospitable to "new men" and did good unifying work. This general atmosphere may be described roughly as one of intellectual adventure; it was Balliol's business to be in the van of thought, to be the first, and not among the last, to respond to any new impulse or inspiration in political, social, or religious matter which came from the world outside, or was suggested to us by older men such as Arnold Toynbee and Arthur Acland. For example, the latter founded a little coterie of about a dozen men of whom half were of Balliol, the rest chosen as kindred spirits from outside, for the discus-

sion of social problems. We used to meet at his house, and argue about every kind of matter of social, or politico-social, interest, even of matters not only then highly controversial, but highly controversial now; even of birth control! I have a photograph of this group, and it is interesting to see among it men so well known in such various ways as C. G. Lang, Michael Sadler, J. A. Spender, Godfrey Benson (Lord Charnwood), Bolton King, historian of Italy, C. E. Mallet, historian of Oxford University, and L. T. Hobhouse. It will be agreed that, whatever the merit of our discussions, at least they did not result in any dull uniformity of opinion or pursuits in after life.

And a little aloof, yet in no scornful isolation, from these disputers in the market-place, were the men of scholarly and artistic tastes—Mackail, Leonard Huxley, Bowyer Nichols, Charles Eliot (though he descended into the world of affairs later on)—to mention only a few typical names; from them emanated a more serene light—though it would not be true to say that it irradiated quite all the dimmer corners of the college.

Such is a snapshot—a mere snapshot—of Balliol in the first half of the 'eighties. But Balliol was not Oxford—as some of the other colleges thought that we sometimes needed to be reminded—and I must move outside its walls; as indeed I had to, literally, for my

fourth year of residence, leaving my pleasant room in college. It was in the buildings between the two quads, with a big window looking over the Fellows' garden and the Garden Quad, to the Hall. By the window stretched a well-cushioned couch; I could lie there, looking out on the lawns and the trees and, of a Sunday morning, hear the Oxford bells; also, of a Sunday evening, the concert in the Hall opposite—which, to be frank, I did not like quite so well.

But *Linquenda est domus*—I had to go, and October, 1885, saw me established in the High, over the shop of Wheeler the Photographer (the business is there no more, I think), nearly opposite St. Mary's. Six of us took the whole house; four of the Balliol men with whom I had lived most intimately in college, Alfred Spender, C. E. Mallet, W. E. Bowen, and Alfred Kalisch; my old friend Coghlan from Univ., and myself. Here, from cushioned seats again, we looked on to the High and could survey the University at large—or at least such parts of it and its activities as came within our sight and our interest. Over Wheeler's we were a very political household.

# V

## OXFORD AT LARGE—AND THE UNION

LEAVING athletics aside—as I have indicated, I was not good enough at them to run the alluring risk of having my life engulfed in them—the centre of my extra-Balliol interests lay from the first in the Union. I came up with three years of debating already behind me at Marlborough. I was a very “political animal,” and the politics and personalities of this enlarged and glorified field of debate drew me with an overpowering attraction. Moreover, I was combative in those days, and much concerned to convert other people to my views; these characteristics I have, I am sorry to say, almost completely lost. I was angry about a lot of things then. I am angry about few things now. One degenerates.

I possess a couple of volumes of the *Proceedings of the Oxford Union Society* which cover the years of my active membership, and they make rather amusing reading, not so much for the politics themselves as for the politics in connection with the persons, or the persons with the politics—which you will. And there

is a pungency about undergraduate politics which is only too lacking in maturer debates. For instance, there was a great field-day (or night) in 1882 when "Hon. G. N. Curzon" moved "That this House views with extreme repugnance the principles upon which the Policy of the (Liberal) Government is based." I like "extreme repugnance"; one imagines the mover suffering something approaching to physical nausea when the doings of Mr. Gladstone were, so to speak, thrust under his nose. Mr. Curzon was opposed by Mr. J. A. Hamilton of Balliol (whose views were in those days somewhat too radical to please, as I fancy, the present Lord Sumner). A battle of giants! Adorned oratory and flashing wit against keen logic and a mordant mockery still heard sometimes, under decent restraint, in a judgment—especially a dissenting judgment—in the House of Lords. The debate was adjourned, and the second night was not so thrilling. But the House shared Lord Curzon's pangs by a large majority.

Lord Curzon's Presidency was over some time before I went up, and this is the only reappearance of his that I can remember or trace; he carried his repugnance to wider fields. Nor did I ever meet him at Oxford; the distance that separated us (not due to seniority alone, of course) was too great. The nearest I ever got to him was in a competition for an essay prize—the Lothian.

The subject was Justinian. He won, I was “honourably mentioned”—and fairly close up, as I was unofficially given to understand. It was bad luck to run up against such opposition, for, though his essay was better, mine was not so bad, and would, I think, have won in most years. Much worse, however, happened to me the next year, when I ventured to attempt an essay on “Medieval Warfare” or some such thing, of which I knew nothing and (honestly) could learn nothing. And against me was Charles Oman, already an expert! I think the entire “field” was left at the post, while the favourite cantered home.

But to return; I come upon another motion which has a pleasing downrightness about it—just ten words: “That the Conservative Party is in a state of decay,” moved in December, 1882, by Mr. H. L. W. Lawson of Balliol. The mover will now probably agree that the patient has not only survived, but made a remarkable recovery; it is true that he has had physics injected into his system which were unthought of, and would indeed have been “repugnant,” in 1882.

It appears from the *Proceedings* that it was on this occasion that Mr. Lang of Balliol made his first speech—against the motion. But his real rise to fame happened in the next term. There was an evening when I did not attend the sitting of the House, being either otherwise

engaged or, possibly, not attracted by the subject of debate, which was whether or not the continued existence of the Established Church of Scotland was a political injustice to the Scottish people. As the evening wore on, excited men came back from the Union to Balliol (I was still in college then), declaring that the finest speech that they had ever heard in their lives had been made in defence of the Kirk, and that the House had been thrilled. "If he can make that subject exciting, he must be another Demosthenes," said a cynical and classical Southron. He was not far wrong, and that speech may be said to have started a career and a reputation which have carried the orator to one of the highest offices in another Established Church—to say nothing of making him President of the Union in less than two years, an advancement so speedy as to be, I think, unprecedented.

Other names now well known crop up in these records, and make it amusing to turn over their pages. Let me take just three or four instances. The future author of *Admirals All* is well represented by Mr. Henry Newbolt of Corpus, who deplores the present condition of the Navy and, while condemning the responsible authorities, demands immediate and vigorous reforms. Lord Robert Cecil of University regrets (in 1885) that the Government has so long

delayed the declaration of war with Russia, and the House agrees with him by a large majority, in spite of the opposition of Mr. A. E. W. Mason of Trinity. Of course, it was before the day of the League of Nations, or the mover might have felt differently. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, a visitor from Trinity College, Cambridge, will not admit that "Protection is essential to the maintenance of our Industries"—and the House agrees, but only by a small majority. Again Lord Robert will have it that I am wrong in asking the House (in 1884) to "anticipate with pleasure the speedy evacuation of Egypt"; and even such sturdy Liberals as Mr. C. E. Mallet of Balliol, and Mr. Sadler of Trinity (Sir Michael Sadler has changed his college now) back him up. I certainly have had to wait a long while for the realization of my hopes. I stand, alas, still more condemned when I oppose Mr. Bruce Williamson's impeccable proposition that "it is the duty of every statesman to preserve and consolidate the Colonial Empire." What can I have been thinking of?

In fact, I belonge dto what it is now the fashion to call the "Left" section of the Liberal Party. I was a Home Ruler before Gladstone; I faced the obloquy incurred by the doings of the Land League; I even entertained in my rooms such firebrands as John Dillon

and Michael Davitt, when they came up to address the Russell Club. Politics apart, Davitt was an attractive and interesting man. He talked of the days of his imprisonment; his prevailing memory of it was of being "always hungry and always cold." And he told us, incidentally, that of all the convicts with whom he had come in contact, when a convict himself, the Tichborne Claimant was the most degraded and vicious. Another Irish visitor was A. M. Sullivan, a delightful man and one of the most eloquent speakers that I have listened to; his powerful aid enabled me (in 1883) to carry a motion in the Union according a general approval to the Radical Programme; great as the impression made by Sullivan's speech was, I cannot help thinking that a good many Conservatives elected to show their feelings by "boycotting" (the word was new then) that sitting of the House.

Another apostle of another unpopular cause came to speak to the Russell Club—William Morris. It is odd to remember that we had great difficulty in getting a place for him to speak in; nobody would harbour us, until at last University College gave us its hall. I, as President of the Club, had the honour of taking the chair for our guest. He was to me very impressive—a big-framed man, in a very loose suit of rough blue serge, with a magnificent head. But I am afraid that he

did not enjoy the meeting much. His speech went well, but afterwards two or three political economy dons heckled him severely on points of detail, and it was evident that these pin-pricks rather puzzled and distressed him. He seemed not to understand how men could meet his beautiful vision of a regenerated society with such petty cavilling. But he stood out as a great man; there could be no mistake about that, any more than there can be to a reader of Mackail's life of him.

As time went on, I myself gradually became prominent at the Union—at least I am forced to suppose so, as I found myself pitted against the acknowledged leaders of the Conservative Party—against Lang and Robert Cecil—in what they call “full dress debates.” But progress to office was slow for a minority leader; Liberal Presidents were comparatively rare phenomena (only five out of fourteen, including myself, while I was up) and I do not think that I should have achieved the chair if Lord Robert Cecil, the retiring Conservative President, had not given me his nomination for the succession—a thing which then counted for much. This testimony of esteem from a political opponent I have not forgotten. I took my seat of state on January 28, 1886—a term after I had taken my degree—and vacated it on March 18th. So brief the days of glory after the years of striving! On the last night on which

I occupied the chair, a motion viewing “with complete distrust the Foreign Policy of the Radical School” was carried by a large majority. The Union had accepted me, but it had certainly not accepted my opinions.

But we Liberals, although we were almost always out-voted, did not consider ourselves at all out-talked. Men like Tom Ellis, C. E. Mallet, Alfred Spender, and his brother Harold, and A. E. W. Mason, could hold their own against any competition that they met at the Union. And there was Dyson Williams, whom I consider to have been the finest debater—not orator but debater—whom I knew at Oxford. Had health and life been continued to him, he could hardly have failed of a political future. His brain was quick as lightning, his tongue sharp as a needle; and he reinforced these natural advantages by the most skilful use of a single eye-glass. When interrupted, he would slowly fix it in place, survey the culprit for a moment, and then suffer the glass to drop again, with an air which said as plainly as words could have that neither interruption nor interrupter was worth anybody’s attention.

Oxford conservatism was not confined to politics or to undergraduates. It coloured most—though not all—of the philosophical and historical teaching. Various philosophies were indeed expounded for our instruction; but it was, I think, a disappointment to our

teachers—and perhaps hardly an advantage to ourselves—if, in our papers, we allowed the Utilitarian dogs to have the best of it; idealism was the proper colour to wear. The dangerous tendencies which war-time scribes on our side (*quorum pars parva fui*) afterwards discovered in Hegel were regarded then as no more than a proper support of the principle of authority in government. In Greek and Roman history (I cannot speak of modern history, as I did not study it) a parallel temper prevailed. “Demagogues” and revolutionary persons came off rather badly; Cleon got it hot; Cicero and Pompey had the better of the argument against Cæsar. Well, at all events Pompey did me a good turn. The very last thing I “mugged up” before going in for my Final Schools was the history of his campaign against piracy in the Mediterranean. And, behold, there was the very question as large as life in the examination paper! It would be a curious thing if Pompey and his pirates helped me to get my first class, because both Pompey and pirates have always rather bored me.

Well—I must warn the reader that I am feeling very open-minded and magnanimous at this point—there is room for conservatism in the world (it takes up a lot at the moment of writing), and where could it be better and more finely expressed than at Oxford? There are

some crude and violent partisans in all camps, but, broadly speaking, Oxford conservatism is not crude, or violent, or ignorant. It is based on knowledge, informed by the study of great literature, hallowed by sacred memories. It is inspired not by a reluctance to change things that are bad, or merely by the fear of losing things that are comfortable (Alas, which of us of any way of thinking can be sure that we are quite guiltless of that?), but by the love of things that have good and beauty in them and are worth preserving amongst all the changes that have come, and all the changes that must come, if only the price of their preservation be not too high. It is for the millions of men and women to whom the government of the Kingdom is now committed to justify their trust by a proper and large-minded discrimination of values and of prices. If you "canalise" a winding river, where shallows alternate with deep pools, it will carry more traffic, but its beauty is gone. The choice may be very difficult.

As at school, so at the Varsity I became a journalist. The *Oxford Magazine* was projected, and I was invited to become one of a group, or committee, which was to run it. The first editor was Richard Lodge of B. N. C. (but a Balliol export). A traitorous memory refuses me the names of all the committee, but I recall Quiller-Couch, Oliver Elton, and D. S. MacColl. If

I may say so without offence to the gentlemen just named and their colleagues, the committee was, and, I think, humbly felt itself to be, just a little what is now called “high brow”; it doubted whether it was in close enough touch with the ordinary man and his ordinary pursuits. I imagine that I presented myself as a possible bridge, or a missing link, since I was known to frequent football matches and the running-ground at Iffley. So I was installed not indeed in the lofty position of an editor (which I had held at Marlborough), but as a sporting reporter. I “did” the football and the athletic sports. I was also, on many occasions, commandeered to do proof-reading, and spent hours at this job at the Clarendon Building. Outside my reporting, I do not remember writing more than one single article—a facetious one, which was unhesitatingly condemned as “absolute rot” by all the friends whose opinions I had (hitherto) respected.

Looking back, I do not quite know why I took on this job; there was no money in it for anybody (on the contrary, the hat had to be sent round from time to time in order to keep us going, and I expect that somebody must have paid out more than he ever acknowledged for that same purpose) and there was no *kudos* for me at least in my humble capacity. But I liked doing it (well, except the proof-reading—I don’t

think that anybody could like that). I believe that I had an unholy liking for doing things in those days. Perhaps I had imbibed the Aristotelian doctrine of *energeia*, and found the good life in the full exercise of all such faculties as I possessed; and "not without pleasure," as the philosopher cautiously concedes, even while he differentiates himself from the Hedonists. For, if you add an average of six or seven hours a day for six days of the week at lectures and reading to the Union and the Magazine, and throw in a decent amount of social festivity and an inordinate amount of argument on every subject conceivable, from the nature of the Trinity downwards, it will appear that the days were pretty well filled up. In fact, it all could be done only by getting up betimes, and having a solid four or five hours of lectures and reading behind one by lunch-time. And it was not easy to get up; it is not when one is young, at least that is what I have found. One of the few advantages of later life is that getting out of bed is much less of a pang.

At the end of the summer term of 1885 all of us over Wheeler's took our Final Schools, and that pleasant fellowship had to break up. We had enjoyed ourselves very much (in spite of approaching Schools) and we had spent rather too much money; the two things are sadly apt to go together, and especially

so at the Varsity. Our landlady had handsome ideas of how gentlemen ought to live; my old in-college lunch of bread-and-cheese and a slice of cake had, under her hands, expanded into fare much more sumptuous; and our handy position in the High attracted many droppers-in who found places at our board—we took all our meals together. Fortunately for our finances there were no cocktails in Oxford then, and not so many ladies. Oxford was further from London in pre-motor-car days, and the stream of visitors more intermittent than it seems to be now, a large influx happening only in Eights Week and at Commem, whereas now—— But I will break off these reflections, since they threaten to fall into a parental and old-bufferish vein.

I did not go down directly after taking my degree. I moved into new quarters in Grove Street, and there abode for two more terms, in the first of which I was in office as President of the Union. I paid my way by taking pupils, and in the intervals attacked the study of the law. I also (for it is only fair to record my failures as well as my achievements) stood twice for a fellowship—in both cases without success or, as I think, any near approach thereto. So I had to go down without that feather in my cap, and—what was at the time even more serious—without the money which attached to it

in my pocket, for most of my scholastic income had come to an end, and it was not very obvious how the resulting void was to be filled. A certain sense of failure and a considerable burden of anxiety weighed on a mind already sad at having to say good-bye to Oxford.

In retrospect these little disappointments and difficulties do not count. They are like the bad inns and the uncivil officials that we meet on our travels through a beautiful country; if we recall them at all, it is to smile at them. Nevertheless, the things are, in fact, annoying at the time, and in the interests of mere truth it is proper to observe that I did not set out to seek my fortune in London in any exultant or even confident mood.

I shall attempt no set eulogium of Oxford; even great men are apt to sound not wrong but inadequate when they essay that task. Even what is, perhaps, the most famous characterisation of her—"home of lost causes and impossible beliefs" is but half the truth—and the less vital half, for she labours more in giving birth to her children than in burying or embalming her dead. And if what I feel about her has not betrayed itself in the few pages I have written, I could never express it. But I will note, in amusement, a curious effect she has on me when I revisit her. In London I do not yet feel myself very old (there are still many of my seniors about), nor do I, save by a deliberate effort, often recall

the sensations of my youth, though often, of course, its memories. But Oxford makes me feel, at one and the same moment, in a sort of double consciousness, enormously old and quite a boy again. Even for a don I should be very elderly; to the men of to-day I am a fossil. But to Oxford herself, with her seven hundred years of learned, quarrelsome, and decently apolaustic life what are the puny forty years that divide what I was from what I am? Why make anything of the little gap between to-day and yesterday? And time, too, for her philosophy is but a convenient figment of the mind. She makes you feel all that—for the moment. The old spell that her spirit wove about you binds you still. She makes me still Hawkins of Balliol—*Hawkins Antonius H. e Coll de Ball; qui in primam classem eorum qui honore digni habiti sunt relatus est*; Mr. Hawkins of Balliol in the Chair: all these things! And not—well, Jowett once observed that some men, promising in their University days, ended up as third-rate novelists. He was supposed to have some particular case in his mind, indeed a rather well-known case; it could not have been mine owing to the date. But I sometimes think of the remark uneasily when I pass his study window in Balliol Garden Quad. After all, novelists are but bye-products—must we say waste-products?—of a learned University.

## VI

### LONDON AND THE LAW

I CAME to town in the spring of 1886 and took up my abode in the family home of St. Bride's Vicarage in Bridewell Place, in the ward of Farringdon Without, in the City of London, a house which owed its existence to my father's zeal and exertions, and which was the apple of his eye. It continued to be my home, and the background of my life, till I married in 1903—some seventeen years, no small slice of a man's life. It was also, in the earlier years, my haven, my stand-by, for it gave me bed and board, and thus saved me from anything like real hardship, however short I might be (and indeed was) of cash to meet outside expenses and to command pleasures. This hospitality was readily, eagerly, and indeed obstinately offered; to the very end, after I had achieved what seemed to me riches, and was riches in the only sense of which it is worth while to be rich—to wit, having more than one has either occasion or desire to spend—it was with the utmost reluctance that my father would accept the smallest return from me. I used to try to get round him by

contributions of champagne and good cigarettes; but he got round me by keeping these luxuries exclusively for his and my friends, while he went on with his glass of claret and his—well, they call them “gaspers” now, and by that or any other name they smell much the same.

From the personal point of view the first two or three years of my legal life may be dismissed in a few words. I was a new boy again; my foot was not on even the lowest rung of the highest ladder that I had ever set out to climb. Wounded vanity—I must confess it—contrasted my present plight with the place I had made for myself at Oxford. Now I was insignificant; nobody knew me, and there seemed no reason why anybody ever should; I was (as I have written about a character in one of my stories) one of five thousand names on five hundred doors—why should anyone pick out that name from all the five thousand? The only quality really required of me was doggedness—to go on working where no work was, to repair to the receipt of custom every morning at half-past nine, well knowing there would be no customers, and to stay there till six o’clock, acquiring knowledge which I had no apparent prospect of ever using. It is a very common story—so common that any young man who goes to the Bar without commanding influence behind him must be prepared to

"stick it" in the same fashion. Luck or genius may rescue a man here or a man there from the ordeal, but it is not prudent in young men to reckon on luck—or even on genius.

But even within the ambit of the law (I am not dealing just now with outside pleasures and distractions) there were great consolations for anybody interested in human nature. The Law Courts are a fine theatre, and there were notable actors on the stage then. (No doubt there are to-day also, but I have not the same opportunity of observing them, or, perhaps, an equal curiosity in observing.) When I was hopelessly tired of reading law books, I used to tell myself—rather hypocritically—that I ought to go across to the Courts to learn the practice and to see the business actually working. Quite true; but it was really rather the practitioners than the practice that I went to study.

The Majesty of the Law could not have been better embodied than in the tall and imposing figure of Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. His manner was full of dignity and courtesy, and he had a beautiful voice and a perfect enunciation; as became the stock to which he belonged, he used the English language as if he loved it. And he liked others to respect it, too. I was once in the Court when a learned counsel, whom we will call Mr. Q, and whose accent clearly showed that he was a

fellow-townsman of mine, was opening a case before him. The following little exchange ensued:

MR. Q.: Then, my lud, plaintiff sent defendant a meemo—

L. C. J.: A *what*, Mr. Q.?

MR. Q.: A meemo, my lud.

L. C. J.: A *meemo*, Mr. Q.?

MR. Q.: Yes, my lud. A memmrandum, my lud.

L. C. J.: O-oh! The plaintiff sent to the defendant a mem-o-ran-dum. Thank you, Mr. Q. Pray proceed.

Mr. Q. looked puzzled, but proceeded.

It occasionally happened that Lord Coleridge listened to the arguments of counsel with his eyes closed. Some averred that he had given way to drowsiness. Small wonder if he had, but the crime, if it be one, could never be brought home to him, for, when his eyes opened, he would put, in his silvery tones, an acute question regarding something that had fallen from counsel two or three minutes before—when the eyes were certainly still shut. So he had not been asleep at all! Or—it was a very skilful performance. Perhaps it was on one of these occasions that he put his celebrated question: "Who is Miss Connie Gilchrist?" which was, to the younger members of the Bar at least, like asking who was the man on the column in Trafalgar Square. But to that I cannot pledge my memory. Once,

when I was still very young at the Bar, I had the excitement of meeting him at a dinner party and found, to my amazement, that the stately judge was not only one of the most amusing raconteurs that I have ever heard, but a mimic hardly surpassed by Miss Cissie Loftus or Sir Gerald du Maurier. But that talent he did not air when "sitting in place" on the Bench.

Another judge who interested me very much was the Master of the Rolls, Lord Esher. He too had a handsome presence and was, I think, not unaware of the fact; he was always faultlessly arrayed—with one or two handsome rings on his fingers. He did not use language with the precision of Lord Coleridge, but rather with the bluff directness of an Early Victorian nobleman—say, as Melbourne might. He did not mind being *supra grammaticam*; his impatient "It don't signify" often disposed of an unimportant point. He was great on commercial law, and liked to approach—or seem to approach—business matters as a man of business rather than as a lawyer. But he was master of a high courtesy, too, and showed it most graciously towards counsel famous for their learning but rarely seen in Court, and not very much at home there; and he was always considerate to young and nervous men—a thing that could not be said of all the judges of that day.

These two were my favourite studies, but there were others worthy of observation—Bowen, with guileless face and gentle manner, putting questions of deadly acumen with the air of merely asking for information; Mathew, emitting a shattering witticism in his husky voice; Fry, expostulating against a bad point with nothing less than moral indignation; Hannen's monumental gravity; his “You have not assisted us, Mr. Biggar,” which rebuked a patriotic but disorderly interruption to the proceedings of the “Parnell Commission,” may almost rank with Queen Victoria's famous “We are not amused”; the gracious courtesy of that great gentleman “Charley” Pollock. I once had the honour of inducing him to give a wrong judgment; at least the Court of Appeal said it was wrong, but then I did not (to my secret relief) have a chance of arguing it in the Court of Appeal; Sir Henry James and Sir Frank Lockwood lost my precious case there, while I sat behind, knowing just the way to put the case and to win it—yet being glad I had not to argue. Such sad conflicts of feeling afflict barristers when they are green.

And then there was my own kinsman—Sir Henry Hawkins. I had known of him for years before, of course, but I do not think that I had met him; for when I was taken, as a small boy, to see him in the Tichborne

Case he was unhappily not there; we found only Dr. Kenealy, pounding, pounding, pounding away. I soon got tired of that, but was consoled and amazed by the Claimant. I remember vividly his portentous body moving slowly down Westminster Hall and crushing itself into a brougham that looked much too small to accommodate the whole of that bulk. A mountain of flesh and fraud he was.

Well, Sir Henry is—or was—a matter of controversy—into which I had once, *pietatis erga*, to plunge, in unequal battle against a justly famous opponent. I will not stir the dying or dead embers of strife further than may be involved in giving my own impression of one who was, anyhow, a curious and interesting human being, and a man who impressed his personality on the general public more than any judge of his day did. I came to know him well, and at close quarters, through acting as his marshal more than once, and in all for several months. For the instruction of the ignorant, I may say that his marshal is to a judge on circuit much what an equerry or an aide-de-camp is to his chief; he looks after domestic and social matters, accepts or refuses imitations, and generally shields his principal from the intrusion of tiresome and undesired persons. It is a pleasant post—light work, “all

found" on a liberal scale, and two guineas a day from a grateful country. It was a godsend to me, I know that.

Perhaps I cannot do better than set down here, almost verbatim, a few lines that I wrote about him on the day on which I heard of his death in 1907 at the age of ninety (he used to back himself for a hundred!): "A strange character; very kind and even soft in some aspects—e. g., towards women, children, and dogs; on the other side, hard, very suspicious, petulantly resentful of the idea of anybody having or making any claim on him, or getting anything, however small, out of him. Again, on the Bench he could be great and most impressive—or, again, he could be perverse and almost childish. Yet always a *person*, as big a man as any in his Court, with a reserve of dignity that he could call on, when he was tired of his fooling or it had served his purpose. In talk he was very amusing, but very egoistic; ignorant of everything (he never read, except the lightest trash, so far as I saw) except life; full of that and his own memories of it. The *Recollections* do him no justice; the hand that wrote them brings out the foibles and follies and leaves out the good side—his real love of justice, and love of getting at the truth and doing justice."

That is at least a candid assessment, and I believe it to be, in essence, a just one. Intellectually he had not a profound or a cultivated mind, and was no great lawyer, but he had wonderfully handy and nimble wits; you could never fool him, nor surprise him, nor catch him out; his memory for facts was remarkable; he never read from his notes in summing up, but was able to repeat important bits of evidence verbatim; he told me that his memory was visual; he saw his facts like counters laid out in rows on a table, and could pick up any one he wanted. And these faculties seemed absolutely immune from fatigue. He could, and did on circuit, sit for ten hours a day (for twelve once, I remember, at Birmingham) and be as fresh as paint at the end—very wrong of him, of course, for counsel and jury were worn out—and that in the awful atmosphere which suited him, but stifled everybody else. For fresh air was the one thing that he feared, and, amidst a copious stock of dislikes, the thing that he hated most. Once, when the process of shutting every chink of every window in court had at last been carried out, the Judge still smelt fresh air, and, under rigorous cross-examination, a burly sergeant of police reluctantly admitted that there was a ventilator in the gallery, and pleaded that he could not prevent some air from filtering in through that. The sergeant's obverse, as

presented to the Bench, argued a correspondingly ample reverse. "Oh, nonsense! Just you sit upon it, Sergeant," said the Judge.

His latter days were serene and happy. He was pleased with his peerage, and found contentment and peace of mind in the Roman Catholic Church, into which he was received late in life and to which he, together with his wife, proved a devoted and munificent adherent.

My thoughts descend from the Bench to the Bar. When I was called in 1887, Samuel Pope was Treasurer of the Middle Temple, and welcomed us fledglings in a pleasant little speech. He was a man of great stature and girth, with a massive good-humoured face. He was, of course, a leader of the Parliamentary Bar, and came seldom to the Courts, so that his reputation was esoteric rather than popular, but I consider him the most persuasive advocate that I have listened to—and just because he did not seem to be an advocate at all. His only aim appeared to be to assist the committee or the judge in arriving at a reasonable and just decision on the matter in question; that the decision should happen to be in favour of his client was no more than an accident. Next to him at the Parliamentary Bar in this greatest quality—for even strong tribunals may be persuaded, whereas only weak ones can be dragooned,

into the desired decision—I should myself place Pember with his engaging manner and complete freedom from professional tricks—a gentleman first, a barrister only incidentally. And indeed he was much more than a barrister—a man of great literary culture and taste, a most accomplished “dilettante.” I had opportunities later on of enjoying his conversation—a delight in every respect except that it made me feel painfully ignorant in matters with which I, and not he, was by then professionally (if distantly) connected.

On the “Chauncery side” Horace Davey and Rigby were the outstanding figures, and, as I saw little of that Division, I recall little of any others. Rigby looked like a prosperous farmer and was no orator, but as a lawyer was possessed of a learning and profundity which were regarded as unequalled. Also he anticipated Mr. Baldwin in making his pipe famous; he once, when speaking from the Government Front Bench, drew it with his handkerchief from his pocket, and it clattered on the floor of the House.

To appreciate Rigby’s learning one had to be learned oneself, but Sir Horace Davey could, so to say, put an edge on his which even the ignorant “common lawyer” could appreciate. Not that his was a “popular” style either; it did not, I believe, carry in the House or on a platform; but for the Court of Appeal

it was perfect—except, perhaps, that he did not always successfully conceal his opinion of the judges. Once I heard a member of that high tribunal put to him a proposition of law, demanding that he should admit its correctness, however fatal to his case it might be. Sir Horace allowed a faint and acid smile to dawn on his face as he replied, "If that's the law, my lord, I must go back to my books." No such severity was to be feared from him "out of hours." There he was a most kindly host and, like his friend Pember, a discerning lover of letters and the arts.

If I turn to the Queen's (it was the "Queen's" then) Bench Division, I am met with the memories of so many men, then or now well known, that I can mention only three or four who were prominent and with whom I came, then or later, into personal relations. The Attorney-General is an officer of great actual importance; in the eyes of young barristers he looms nothing less than enormous, and the office loses none of its majesty, when it is held by such men as those who became Lords James of Hereford, Russell of Killowen, and Alverstone. The impression made by these three might in each case be summed up in one word; Webster (Alverstone) was solidity, James movement, Russell force. Webster seemed like some powerful engine pounding the facts into the shape that he wanted.

James, restless, animated, excitable and nervous, poured forth hot and swift speech like a stream that seems to boil as it falls down the mountain-side. Russell's onset was like the relentless march of an invading force through enemy country, each stage of its devastating advance being marked by a clinching and triumphant pinch of snuff. Yet—odd to say—these men were all human. It would not become me to labour that point, but I cannot refrain from recalling the only consultation that I had with Sir Henry James. I came anxious and full-primed, as may be supposed. But what did we talk about? The case? Well, just a little about the case, but mainly how he and I, by our joint and agitated efforts, could delete from his collar a splash of Strand mud with which a profane vehicle had defiled its whiteness. And if Lord Russell of Killowen did do the popular novelists of a fleeting hour the honour of seeking relaxation from his judicial labours in the perusal of their works, he might have got their names straight. So at least I felt when, after expressing his approval of Stanley Weyman's *Prisoner of Zenda*, he kindly complimented me on *A Gentleman of France*. A parent clings to his own child and will not accept even a handsomer changeling!

But the day came when I was no longer so free to roam the Courts at will, the day when my long idleness

ended. I had relieved it by a little political speaking for the Eighty Club, and I had already tried my hand at a few articles for the papers; very few of them were accepted. I think that the first I ever got printed was a "turnover" in the old *Globe*. A turnover was an article which filled the last column on the front page, and just overlapped into the second—hence its name. It might be about anything; my subject was the Law of Libel, humorously treated, and I got a guinea for it. Thus encouraged, I persevered, but I never had the luck to please the fancy of the *Globe* again. In fact, I was becoming thoroughly discouraged both with law and with literature. (I intend, by the way, to use the term literature to describe—for the sake of convenience—my efforts as a writer, without prejudice to the question of what is or is not literature in a critical sense; a person whose fate in life has made him acquainted with "election literature" and "propaganda literature" is not likely to be fussy or fastidious in his application of the term.) But changes came in time to save me from despair. The first was that a path in writing opened before me which I had not previously explored; the second that I was suddenly, and as though by a miracle, immersed in legal work. I found that, though I might not be able to write articles, I could invent stories; and one day my clerk came in with a bundle of papers

and said—most surprisingly: “Mr. R. S. Wright’s compliments, sir, and would you kindly look through this case and let him have a note about it.”

Now Mr. R. S. Wright was Junior Counsel to the Treasury. How in heaven’s name had he heard of me? Some fairy must have waved a magic wand on my behalf.

The fairy in the case was R. H. Hadden, who ended his days—too soon, and deeply regretted by many friends—as Vicar of St. Mark’s, North Audley Street. He had been curate to an old friend of my father’s—a man famous in his day, and especially famous in the City, Rogers of Bishopsgate—“Hang-theology Rogers,” as he was nicknamed, owing to his having once, at a meeting of clergymen where a doctrinal wrangle impeded a discussion which he considered more urgent, allowed himself to exclaim, “Hang theology! Let’s get to business!” He it was too, who, being called upon by the toastmaster at a City dinner to say grace after meat under the style of “Canon Rogers,” responded to the call, saying: “I am not a Canon, I am only Rector of Bishopsgate. For what we *have* received, the Lord make us truly thankful.” Actually a prominent and most useful clergyman and citizen, especially in educational work, he was—to youthful eyes at least—rather a formidable old gentleman with decidedly un-

clerical manners; and his curate, through close association and a strong affection, had taken on some of his manners as well as emulating him in his work and his qualities. Hadden was a familiar figure at the Reform Club, generally with a cigar in the corner of his mouth—a mouth from which (without removal of the cigar) there would issue vigorous denunciation of many things, freely spiced with imprecations just on the right, or clerical, side of actual swearing—hangs, dashes, confounds, and the like. They did no harm, and indeed added to the humanity of a very sincere, loyal, and lovable man, to whom my father was much attached, and who sought to serve me for my father's sake. He served me well indeed, for he told Wright, who was himself of Balliol, an ex-pupil and a great friend of Jowett's, that there was a Balliol man eating out his heart in idleness in the Temple. It was enough for Wright; he made up his mind that the idle man should have a chance to prove what he was worth. And it might have been enough to determine the whole course of my life; it was neither Hadden's fault nor Wright's that in the end it did not. There the responsibility is all my own; and I do owe to them what I always find comfort in remembering—that when the time came that I left the law I did not leave it as a hopeless failure.

But already my heart was divided, a prey to conflicting allegiances. Two of its mistresses kept house together smoothly enough; Madame Law and Lady Politics seldom quarrel, and indeed often lend one another a helping hand. But, besides those legitimate occupants, an unsanctified slut had effected entry and made good her footing. I had written a novel, and was on fire to write another.

## VII

### LAW, LITERATURE, AND A LITTLE POLITICS

I CANNOT remember precisely when I began to “devil” for R. S. Wright; it must have been somewhere about the beginning of 1889, but, when I have to trust wholly to memory, I am terribly hazy about dates. In the autumn of 1890, however, I began to keep a record, irregular and imperfect indeed but sufficient to show roughly what I was doing and when I was doing it. The earliest part of this record—it can hardly be called a diary—is encumbered by a running comment on current politics, which had then, and has now, no value, since I knew nothing that any outsider did not know; it can be totally neglected here. But on the personal side, the record—which I have continued to write in the same irregular fashion, up to the present time—serves to keep me straight, and supplies sometimes a sharper and more living impression of events and people than memory alone could supply.

Devilling for Wright was no joke. In term time I was often at it for eight or nine hours a day. He was a tremendous worker himself and set a high standard for

others. Scamped work was no good to him, and he let one know it very plainly. His kindness to me was immense—and his rudeness considerable; I remember it now with affection and amusement. He was short and sharp of speech; a very quick worker, and impatient—a little too impatient, perhaps—of doubt or indecision. And it was not enough for him to win a case; he must win it on the right point; it was in vain to suggest (as one sometimes profanely did) that such-and-such a point would be good enough for Mr. Justice So-and-so; it was not, therefore, good enough for Wright.

He seemed quite indifferent to personal comfort and surroundings; indeed the room in which he worked was a strange sight. By a freak of memory I always see it on a winter evening, after the Courts had risen. Wright sat—always with a bad tall hat on his head and a pipe in his mouth—at a large table, on which were scattered, in a haphazard way, half a dozen candles, about as many large matchboxes, and a box or two of cigars. The furniture was shabby and scanty, and the most striking feature of the room was a large and dusty mountain of obsolete briefs which filled one corner and had apparently been accumulating for years; when he had done with a set of papers he would throw it on the top of the mountain and there it stayed—at least I never saw anybody arrange anything or

clear anything away. When, on Wright's elevation to the Bench, Mr. Asquith succeeded to the tenancy of this gloomy and grimy apartment, it underwent a transformation indeed.

Recognizing that in the work Wright gave me there lay my best, and probably my only, chance of getting on, I toiled away at it manfully, but, owing to that divided allegiance of mine, with many a private groan. Yet I had enough good sense to be aghast when Wright was made a judge in the autumn of 1890. I saw my occupation gone—and my chances too. I had had some little cases of my own, besides the devilling, but these too had been put in my way by Wright, and now he could, as a judge, do no more for me in that way either. But I did not do full justice to his kindness, or to Mr. Asquith's either. Wright commended me to some of his old clients, notably to the Great Western Railway Company, to whom he had been adviser-in-chief, and who soon began to send me some work; while Mr. Asquith let me do some work for him; two or three times I was his junior in a Great Western case, and often prepared opinions on railway law for his revision. I must not say more, but I cannot say less, than that there has been nothing in my life that I have valued and enjoyed more than working under and with him, as I continued to do not infrequently until he became

Home Secretary in August, 1892. When he came back to practice at the Bar, he remembered me and sent for me again; but by that time I had gone.

None the less I had henceforward a great deal more leisure than under Wright's regime, and the private groans are on the score of under-employment, not of too much work. I had time enough and to spare for my writing now. And I wrote a lot.

The trouble was that the legal work, when it came, paid, and the writing, when it came, did not; and it came, as it always has with me, not at command, but intermittently and capriciously—a violent fit, followed by a long period of barrenness. But it was laying hold of me more and more, in spite of a complete lack of success. I had already published one novel—on commission, at my own expense; it cost me fifty pounds, and the royalties amounted to thirteen. I had written another and hawked it round half the publishers before it was accepted—with much the same pecuniary result. But the critics encouraged me, if the public did not, and, when no novel was in hand, I made some very useful guineas by short stories—very small affairs—for a good many of which I found a hospitable home in the columns of the *St. James's Gazette*, of which Sidney Low was then editor; he gave me welcome and valuable help.

So, the law going by degrees a little better, and the writing going by degrees just a little better, there seemed room to launch out a little in another direction, to have another throw with fortune. I was like a man backing three single numbers at roulette. If any one of them "came up," I was much richer. If none of them did—but a gambler does not consider that. In short, it seemed time to give politics a turn.

Accordingly when it was proposed to me, in the summer of 1891, that I should become Liberal candidate for South Bucks, I accepted the offer without excessive searching of heart. The enterprise was on what I then still regarded as my main line of advance—a political career, and, though the chances of success were very small, it was time to earn my spurs. Money was the main difficulty. Although I expected (and received) a handsome subsidy, my personal expenses were bound to be considerable and would involve trenching on my small capital—a consideration which gave me some uneasiness. However, I put it behind me, went down to High Wycombe, made my inaugural speech, was most kindly received, and installed in my new position.

This episode in my life—for it turned out, alas, to be only that, and not, as I fondly imagined, a step in my career—was very good fun. I prepared for it by a trip to Ireland; Home Rule being the dominant

issue, I was anxious not to have to confess to hostile hecklers that I had never been to the country whose government I was proposing to revolutionise. My brother and my friend Coghlan came with me, and we tramped from Glengariff to Killarney, Limerick, and Clonmell. The people were much excited and divided over the Parnell divorce case, and Parnell's claim to remain, none the less, leader of the Irish party. I remember, in one of the cottages, or cabins, which we called at to get a drink of milk in the course of a walk, a rare set-to between an old peasant and his old wife; he was for obedience to the priests who bade him abandon the discredited chief, but the old lady was an *esprit fort*. I will not repeat what she said about priests, but she declared that Mr. Parnell might, so far as she was concerned, get in the divorce court as often as he liked; none the less he was "the man for Oireland." A good stout-hearted adherent!

Having thus enjoyed a pleasant excursion, and fortified myself against the hecklers, I embarked on a "campaign" in the constituency, addressing one or more meetings almost every night—bar Sundays—for about six weeks. These were rather laborious days; I used to leave home at half-past nine, work at law or at a new novel in the Temple till about five, and then go down by train to my appointed town or village—

or as near as I could get to it. There were no cars then, and often a longish drive in a gig or a fly was added to my labours. I used to get home again, as a rule, between eleven and twelve. But the fight was lively and inspiriting, even though the audiences might be hostile or—what was much worse—almost non-existent. I was, of course, much abused. My opponent, the sitting member, was Viscount Curzon (afterwards Earl Howe), a member of a great local family; I was a carpet-bagger and a self-seeking lawyer. Though I could not—or at all events cannot now—deny an element of truth in the accusation, I could and did remind my assailants that, in that same neighbourhood, a candidate named Disraeli had once been the victim of very similar accusations. On the whole I flatter myself that I gave as good as I got.

But it was no use in the end. I had some good, hospitable, and influential friends; not all of them are on the same side in politics now, though Lord Lincolnshire still holds the banner high (rather a tattered banner, I am afraid, just now). And the chair-makers of Wycombe were with me by a big majority. They were fine keen fellows, and towards me most cordial and enthusiastic. I still do most of my reading in a chair which they made and gave me—together with other handsome gifts—to commemorate the fight

and to console me for the defeat which befell us in the General Election of 1892, when I was beaten by a majority of above a thousand.

So ended my electioneering, not only for the time, but, as it turned out, for good and all. I was indeed once again chosen as candidate—for a Scottish constituency—in 1900, but an attack of bad health made it impossible for me to stand, and by the time another General Election occurred I was too engrossed in other pursuits, and had, moreover, lost much of my desire for a political life, as well as most of my confidence in my power to command a political career. By now—indeed years ago—both desire and confidence are entirely gone. There remains only a gentle regret that I have never sat in the House of Commons. I should like to have had that experience.

For the political life is in its higher grades a great one, and to be immersed in great affairs makes a man bigger. I have a strong liking and admiration for public men, and I have small patience with people who sneer at them; thinking to be superior, they are merely silly. One sometimes hears a tenth-rate writer, or artist, sneer at Cabinet Ministers. Good God! I have known many Cabinet Ministers, and the least gifted of them had ten times the brains possessed by such critics as these. Moreover, an active concern in public affairs

keeps a man young and healthily combatant, and is the best preservative against the intellectual and moral dangers of old age—against growing narrowness, stagnation, and a fossilizing of the mind and heart. It is better to pray to be delivered from this slowly encroaching death than from the “sudden death” of the Litany. A brilliant political opponent once called Mr. Gladstone “an old man in a hurry.” But what a wonderful thing it is to be in a hurry when you are eighty years old! To be still keen, alive, interested—actually still hasty, rash, and ambitious—at fourscore years! It is to have the gift which the Goddess forgot to bestow on Tithonius.

After my defeat in South Bucks, I settled down again at my chambers—No. 1 Brick Court, just opposite Middle Temple Hall—to do what? That question pressed itself upon me with increasing urgency during the next two years or so. Although the last of my devil-living went with Mr. Asquith’s appointment to be Home Secretary, I had no particular reason to complain of my progress in the law. I had the good fortune to be briefed as junior in two Election Petitions—a select and blessedly lucrative line of practice. One of them created a good deal of interest because my client was an Indian gentleman, Mr. Naoroji, who had been elected in Finsbury, and on whom Lord Salisbury had be-

stowed a wide celebrity by referring to him as a "black man," a description which made up in pungency for what it lacked in accuracy, and had the high political merit of making the Conservative leader's opponents extremely angry. I am glad to say that we succeeded in keeping Mr. Naoroji's seat for him. And other work came in slowly indeed, but in a satisfactory fashion, especially from my good friends the Great Western Railway. In fine, unless I made a conspicuous fool of myself, I was entitled to see a competence before me, and even a good practice in a future not too painfully remote.

But I had already published, besides shorter pieces, three novels, and had finished a fourth, and had an idea for a fifth. Though the published ones had not scored a commercial success—a fate which is to be shared by the fourth and fifth also—I had received a good deal of encouragement from the critics, notably in a "flaming" review of *Mr. Witt's Widow* in the *Times*—and I could not make up my mind to abandon the pursuit. In fact, I gave to it every hour that the law left vacant, and I began to hope that hours would be left vacant. I find in my record—towards the end of 1892—the confession, "I almost hate having law now; it's come too late to please me, and it interrupts."

I need not dwell on this conflict of mind, destined

to last for the best part of two years more, two busy but not very happy years; for I was conscious that to work at the Bar with a divided mind must result not merely in a failure to do justice to any abilities in that line which I might possess, but also, in all probability, in a failure to do justice to the interests of my clients, who, after all, were paying me for the best that I could do. To end the conflict needed only the decisive impulse which real success with a book would give.

One day—it was the 28th of November, 1893—I was walking back from the Westminster County Court (where I had won my case) to the Temple when the idea of “Ruritania” came into my head. Arrived at my chambers, I reviewed it over a pipe, and the next day I wrote the first chapter. Though sometimes interrupted by law work, I sat tight at the story, sometimes writing as much as two chapters a day. I was only once seriously “stuck up”; I seemed to have got “The Prisoner” so tightly shut up in “Zenda” that it was impossible to get him out of it. But that difficulty was in the end surmounted and, on the whole, the writing was easy and pleasurable. I finished the first draft in just a month—on the 29th of December. I did not regard it as nearly such a “serious effort” as I had attempted once or twice before—not so ambitious certainly as *The God in the Car*, which I had finished

just about a month before I began *The Prisoner*, though it was not published till later; but, on the other hand, rather more ambitious than a series of little dialogues which I had already begun—or began very soon afterwards (I cannot trace the exact dates)—in the *Westminster Gazette*; with these latter I used to amuse myself on “off” evenings in the study at St. Bride’s Vicarage, and, honestly, nobody was more surprised than I was at the notice they attracted.

The root idea of *The Prisoner of Zenda* is, of course, merely a variant on the old and widespread theme of “mistaken identity.” It is indeed astonishing how many stories, novels, and plays may be reduced on analysis to this ancient plot and this elementary situation. Sometimes it is very nearly the whole story, sometimes only an ingredient in a more elaborate structure; but in some shape, and in varying degrees, it pervades English comedy from Shakespeare’s day to our own. In itself it is no more than a starting-point for the characters, emotions, and incidents which it is the writer’s real business to develop, but it opens a fruitful field to an imagination which can see and work out its dramatic possibilities and the ways in which it can be varied. I think that the two variants which struck the popular fancy in my little book were royalty and red hair; the former is always a safe card to play,

and its combination with the latter had a touch of novelty.

However that may be, the old situation served yet another author well in my person, and gave that decisive impulse for which my wavering mind had been waiting. The book came out about the beginning of April, 1894; its success was quick and great. Besides it, I had three more volumes to revise and prepare for the press in the same year; and I was writing more, in response to urgent invitations. The logic of the position was too strong for much more doubt. Yet I still lingered on for about three months, doing some law and much writing. Finally, on the 4th of July, I wrote letters of thanks and farewell to the clients who had given me the chance which I was now relinquishing by leaving the Bar. My record says: "It is all an uncertainty, but I could not stand the worry and must chance it. I am happy in having done it."

Well, I have not always been quite so securely happy since. The great profession of the Law needs no praise from me; nor, on the other hand, shall I attempt to blink what I have already indicated—its trials, demands, and exactions. But on the human side it is a pleasant, sociable life; keen rivalries must exist, but they seldom show themselves crudely or in ill-will. I made many friendships, most of which I have (save for the

inevitable toll of the years) been lucky enough to preserve. Lawyers are very good companions; I am not sure that they are not, taken in the bulk, the best; they know the world, and their "shop" is more full of human interest than the "shop" of most other professions. And a legal training does a lot for a man's mind; for example, it teaches him how to say what he means —a valuable training for a writer; not merely so to express himself on paper that most people will gather something like what he probably meant, but so to use words that the cleverest advocate in the world cannot plausibly argue that he meant anything else than precisely what he did mean. This is an ideal, even for Equity and Parliamentary draftsmen; but it is a good one for a novelist or a playwright to keep before his eyes. Of course, to start with, he must know what he means himself.

I am then very far from regretting my years at the Bar. I count myself lucky in that the changes and chances of my life have made me pretty intimately acquainted with a number of "circles"—clerical, scholastic, athletic, academic, political, legal, literary, theatrical—besides general society in town and country. I reckon the legal as far from the least stimulating or the least pleasant of all these; and, at any rate, it is one more. Try to know all sorts of people is the gospel

I would preach, for so you save yourself from being no more than a member (however admired a member) of a clique (however distinguished a clique). Know as many cliques as you will—or can—but swear the oath of allegiance to none of them.

## VIII

### FROM A NOVELIST'S WINDOW

THUS I had lost the last pretence of an “amateur status” and had become a declared professional; which meant in my case, as in most cases, that I was backing myself to live by amusing the public for a period which by actuarial reckoning was not less than thirty years and which has, in fact, proved rather longer. If everybody would sit down in a cool hour, and, before committing himself to that undertaking, consider the solemn audacity of it, I suppose that there would not be any professional novelists—and at least a shortage in a good many other lines of literary and artistic effort. But such plunges are not made in cool hours; the “inner fire” is burning more fiercely for being fanned by the breeze of a little success; invention seems inexhaustible; and is it to be conceived that people should cease to like what they now appear to love so well?

For I was—in the year 1894—what Thucydides did not wish his History to be, the success of a season

(That seems to me the nearest modern equivalent of the famous and scornful words). I make the claim without arrogance, because I have seen the successes of so many seasons. "Attorney-Generals come and go," said one of them once to me, in the course of paying a polite compliment. So do "Successes of a Season" (Only the Attorney-Generals usually have much more comfortable places to go to); and when one of them asks me, with that charming courtesy which young writers of to-day hardly ever fail to show to their seniors (in personal intercourse, I mean; Heaven forbid that we should seek to blunt their pens when the point is bared in critical attack!) for a word of advice, I always answer: "Invest at least half the money that you're making." I trust that some of them are to-day blessing my name as they bank their dividends. And to the credit of the Successes let it be said that they have always received my sardonic little warning with the utmost good-nature; perhaps because most of them don't at the time believe in it.

When I left the Temple, I set up a workshop in Buckingham Street, off the Strand, just between the Adelphi and Charing Cross. The house—it exists no more—was last but one from the bottom of the street, where the old Water Gate is, and I had two small rooms three floors up. Very soon after I had taken this

step—perhaps a few months, possibly a year—a gentleman wrote a paragraph for the newspapers; if his eye should fall on this page, I should like to congratulate him on the success of his paragraph, and to thank him for the well-nigh world-wide “publicity” which it has given to me and my habits. It describes—I use the present tense because it is only a trifle over thirty years old, was certainly in active circulation within the last two or three years and will, I feel confident, bob up again shortly (in the interval between writing and revising this manuscript it actually has)—how I start from St. Bride’s Vicarage every morning at precisely 9:30, proceed along the Embankment to Buckingham Street, sit down at my writing-desk there as the clock strikes ten, write till it strikes one, go out to lunch, return at two, write till five, and—walk back again.

I shall not say a word to disturb that picture. All my friends who used to visit me in my purlieu (I owe the name to one of them) know how true it is. It has, indeed, lost me some repute in the eyes of those who do not believe that novels can be written “to order”—as, for example, Scott and Trollope wrote them—but must wait for a divine afflatus, a thing that can hardly be expected to synchronize with Big Ben every weekday morning. But, on the other hand, I feel that it must

have convinced many young people that regular habits and a simple life, apart from their obvious moral value, may produce a constant and stable output of readable fiction; just as Dean Gaisford of Christ Church observed in a sermon about the study of Greek literature—it not only elevates above the vulgar herd, but leads not infrequently to positions of considerable emolument.

Buckingham Street was an agreeable little quarter with a character of its own (not all good at nights) and some associations. Peter the Great had lived next door to me what time he was learning to build ships at Deptford; Mr. Joseph Pennell lived opposite; and it was averred that David Copperfield's famous dinner party had been given either in my house (but on the first floor) or in the Peter-the-Great one. For the larger part, however, we had lost most of what the law calls our residential qualifications. Mainly we were charities, companies, caretakers, and cats. The cat's-meat man was a punctual figure; he had a wooden leg, around which the cats turned themselves in affectionate anticipation. Every now and then a man would appear—whence I know not—with a cage of rats, and you could give your dog a treat at fourpence per rat; every head was out of every window on these occasions. And once—late in the evening—I remember a lady in a cloak of

singularly vivid blue (it defied all lamplight efforts to dull its dazzling azure) and a white frock running—again from where?—wildly down the street, crying “Albert, Albert!” Before one could move, she was gone through the Water Gate, and so out of ken. Whence—and whither? But then where in the world should odd and exciting things happen unless just off the Strand? People who like monotony can resort to the Pacific Islands, where there appears to be only one way of going to the dogs.

However, to do my paragrapher justice, I must admit that I wrote a good deal during the six years or so that I had my workshop in Buckingham Street. Into the details of those labours there is no need to go. In my experience writing one book is much like writing another; a writer shares to the full in a lover’s “alternate joy and woe,” and in most cases is no more able to justify his feelings at the bar of reason; for I doubt very much whether the badness or goodness of the result bears any relation to the pains involved. That is heresy, I suppose; hard writing makes easy reading is the ancient, respectable, and moral saying; but I fancy that it is very far from being universally true. Certainly what I consider to be my best book—*The King’s Mirror*—cost me a lot of trouble, but so did what I consider to be my worst (its name may be left

in well-deserved oblivion), and at least two of those to which critics and public have been most partial involved less labour and less heart-searching than most of their less successful fellows.

There is another point on which I am something of a heretic, or at least a sceptic; I mean the somewhat facile accusation which is constantly brought against successful authors that they are "writing too much." No doubt it is sometimes true; to be constantly talked about has its attractions, and it is an ungrateful task to turn money from the door when it comes asking to be taken in. But the criticism does not take enough account of the fact (I think that most creative writers—I use the adjective merely to distinguish those who invent from those who criticise and assess—will agree that it is a fact) that it is as difficult to refrain from writing when you have an idea as it is to write when you have not an idea, and that the ultimate value of the idea—of the theme and of its embodiment in characters—can hardly be judged without "trying it out." Not until you have done that can you get anything approaching to an objective view of it.

"If you must write it, then write it, and burn it," the stern critic will object. Why not, indeed? It is only sending four or five months of your life flying up the chimney! Only—if you are wrong so often in thinking

your work good, may you not, just for once, be wrong in thinking it bad?

But it is time to leave the narrow confines of my workshop and take a rather wider view of London, at least of that fraction of London which is all that I—and, indeed, most men whose lives have run on the same lines as mine—can claim to know. For when we say London, we generally mean a little city set within a great city, and if we find ourselves east of the Bank or west of Chelsea, south of the river or north of Hampstead, we feel ourselves exiles in a strange land, and have to ask our way oftener than we have to in Paris. Just a slice out of the great cake is all that we munch and savour: though certainly it is a slice very full of plums.

In spite of “writing too much,” I had now, thanks to my release—or retreat—from the Temple, much more leisure, and, being of a gregarious disposition, I devoted most of it to dining in the company of my friends, or at more public functions where speech-making was the order of the day. I revelled in the infinite diversity of men and women to be seen and heard, and even talked to; and sometimes when I read literary recollections of “London in the Nineties,” or references to that period in the newspapers, my first petulant impulse is to protest that all London did not

live in Chelsea, and all London did not read *The Yellow Book*. Homage to Chelsea! It is a delightful quarter, with a fine capacity for talking about itself—unsurpassed even by the Boule Mich! And if one looks at the famous *Yellow Book* now, there is to be found in it, as it seems to me, a great deal of pretty writing, though not much great writing, and an airified intellectual arrogance which is amusing. And “Fin-de-siecle”? A catchword that soon became a joke! We actually ended the century still beset by the miseries of the Boer War.

Nothing is further from my purpose than to attempt any general survey of literary affairs at this date, but it may, I think, be observed in passing that the perpetual conflict between—shall we say?—esoteric and popular literature was even more acute than it generally is. This was due, in my judgment, mainly to two very different men—to the surviving influence of Henley and the present influence of Oscar Wilde. They were both what may be called pagan influences, yet opposite as the poles; though perhaps in Swinburne they kept house together uneasily—or on a Box and Cox system. They united only in condemning the essentially Christian virtues—charity, meekness, and self-denial or self-abnegation. Both were for self-assertion, but the one turned to a defiance of fate (not a submission to it),

the other to an adoration of pleasure, an exploitation of the senses. Men make their philosophies, as they make their gods, after their own image.

I shall say nothing about Henley the man, for I saw him only once or twice, and brought away only a superficial and perhaps unjust impression of aggressiveness; I speak without prejudice, for he did me the honour of accepting some contributions from me; and, whatever virtues he may have lacked or scorned, he had the literary virtue of being hard to please.

The other figure—written about so much, and indeed too much—yet commands mention from anybody who met him. For the poor old Nineties seem nowadays to be diversely represented as all Queen Victoria or as all Oscar Wilde! Of course they were not all of either of these arresting personages. Or even of both; for a synthesis would offer difficulties not merely to history but even to imagination.

Wilde was a delightful member of a dinner party, especially in company before whom he knew that it was no good “showing off.” His talk was easy, witty, and apparently quite spontaneous. He was not monopolistic, but took his part in that fair exchange which is the essence of pleasant conversation. He sank, for the time being, the *poseur* and the hunter of notoriety.

But the least element of publicity in the occasion brought out his besetting sin. At once he had to be conspicuous, to attract all eyes (or all that he could) in the room; he became ostentatious and loud, and made the judicious grieve that a man of such gifts should so misuse them. Strange indeed that a man of delicate, if not great, genius, should court notoriety and gossip at the cost of derision, and in the end, to his own fatal undoing! At all costs he must be the talk of the town; and the day came when he was, in a way and to a degree that hardly any other man has been in living memory. Of that last phase there is no need to speak. It did but increase the mingled feeling of pity and dis-taste that had always qualified the admiration which his endowments commanded. Now, in retrospect, let admiration and pity alone continue; for the faults of the body the body paid, and is acquit.

After the death of Tennyson (him I saw but once, driving in a victoria in Piccadilly, in a huge soft hat and a voluminous cloak), George Meredith was, by virtue of eminence and seniority, the acknowledged King of English letters. His name and fame had been a legend to me even in boyhood, for my home at Leatherhead was but two or three miles from his at Box Hill, and my father had been amongst his

acquaintance. But I do not recollect having actually seen him till I met him at an evening party in 1894. He seemed to my still youthful eyes already very old, and he was, alas, already very lame, but (as everybody knows) his head and his features were of a rare beauty. When I was presented to him, he remembered who I was and recalled old days; but I was much more delighted to find that he had been reading *The Dolly Dialogues*, and (in the words which I wrote next day) "he was most kind to me, telling me things pleasant to be told by such a man. He had great vivacity and felicity in talking, and the grace and charm of the little audience he gave me were very great." (I am ashamed to say that the same entry, after recording that Coquelin *ain* and Madam Réjane recited, goes on to comment on the lady's "gown or lack of one—low in front indeed, at the back non-existent save for a short inch above the waist." I should not permit myself any such comments at the present day.) I met Mr. Meredith once again in or about those days in London. I can find no record of this occasion, but I remember that Miss Ellen Terry was sitting between him and me. The great author paid the great actress splendid compliments, compliments such as smacked—even in the Nineties—of the vanished courtliness and elaboration of ancient days, days when a com-

pliment was expected to be also an epigram. Miss Terry must have been pleased, but we were all listening, and her precarious sense of gravity was apparently endangered, for she turned to me for a second, and gave me a confidential wink. To speak in a metaphor, I put that wink in my waistcoat pocket and have kept it ever since a treasured possession.

Years had passed, and I myself had become a mature person, before I saw Mr. Meredith again. In 1908 I was one of a deputation from the Society of Authors sent to offer to him, our President, our congratulations on his eightieth birthday. My colleagues were Herbert Trench and Israel Zangwill, both, unhappily, now gone from amongst us, taking with them much that we could ill spare—not the least perhaps (because among the less common gifts) Trench's boyish heartiness, and the stimulating acidity with which Zangwill was wont to season his discourse.

Mr. Meredith's physical disabilities had grown upon him—it could not be otherwise—but his mind rose brilliantly triumphant over them. Time had taken from his sword neither its burnish nor its point. He seemed very glad to see us, and talked copiously. We had taken a letter of congratulation with us. I wrote it, and, somewhat fearful of exalted criticism, submitted it to that master and judge of English, Austin Dobson,

who passed it without amendment. Mr. Meredith took it from me, as I was about to read it (he was by now very deaf), and himself read it aloud, with a kindly pleasure, as it appeared, but not entirely without the criticism that I had feared. For instance, when he came to "sincere homage and congratulations," he paused and remarked "Nasty sibilant word, that 'sincere'!" I wished that Mr. Dobson had kept me straighter.

Presently he talked of his own work and of what men said of it, taking a just pride in having stuck to his own line and won on it—as he nobly had. He admitted that he was obscure sometimes (It was Zangwill, not I, who dared to raise the point) "when the thought struggled," but added, "never obscure in dialogue." I think that this is, broadly speaking, a true self-judgment, though it does not meet all the objections which may be raised against his dialogue. We ended on a light note. At that day the vendors of commodities were inviting people to write them "Limericks" for advertising purposes. One of us, in the course of talk, mentioned these things, and I confessed to having written and sent in one that pleased me well, but, alas, had won no prize. "I've sent in some, too," said Mr. Meredith, unexpectedly. "I send them in in my nurse's name. But I've never got a prize either." That little accidental glimpse of the

great old novelist and poet amusing the end of his days and cheating his infirmities with such pleasant trifling—and unsuccessful too!—has always seemed to me a very human and moving thing.

So we left him—certainly one of the most brilliant intellects that ever devoted itself, in the main (I am not forgetting his poems, though I am not familiar with them), to the depicting of human character and manners in novels. I do not know how his fame will stand in the future. What may—nay, to be candid, must—militate against it is not properly to be called “obscurity.” It is rather an excess of light, and of the number and variety of the lights; or again, in a different figure, the edifice is so richly and gorgeously ornamented that the true and vital lines of the architecture—which really makes and supports the building—are hard for any but an acute and practised eye to disentangle and appraise.

Or, again, perhaps the idea may be hazarded that his own intellect was so individual that he failed to fuse completely with the character which he was describing, and remained himself a semi-separate entity inside the unity which it is the supreme achievement of a novelist to create between—and out of—himself and his imagined creatures. But these suggestions must be left; they are only uncertain speculations as to the reason

why, to one eager reader at least, his novels seem sometimes rather a magnificently staged spectacle than a true reflection of life.

A little over twelve years later I was again chosen by the Society of Authors to form one of a deputation —this time to congratulate Mr. Meredith's successor in the Presidency of the Society, Mr. Thomas Hardy, whose eightieth birthday fell on June 2, 1920 (Derby Day in Spion Kop's year). Mr. Birrell was our chief, Mr. Galsworthy and myself his colleagues. Although I had met Mr. Hardy several times in London (thanks to opportunities given to me by Lady St. Helier, to whom and to whose family I owe far more kindness and friendship than I can attempt to acknowledge adequately), my most abiding memory of him dated back nearly twenty years—to a little Whitsuntide party at Mr. Edward Clodd's house at Aldeburgh, in May of the year 1901. We were six in all—the host, Mr. Hardy, Sir James Frazer (not yet Sir James, but already of *The Golden Bough*, that mighty and fascinating monument of labour and genius), Robertson of Chitral fame (his *Story of a Minor Siege* is excellent reading), Clement Shorter, and myself. We walked and talked, and talked and walked; we made a pilgrimage—in a spirit of, I fear, no more than semi-solemnity—to FitzGerald's grave, for half of

us were of the Omar Khayyám Club; and we went on a picnic up the river. As is (according to my experience) the usual case with excursions by water, going was all plain sailing—literally so in this instance and under our host's accomplished navigation; but, coming back, wind and tide were both against us, and we had to take to the oars. Whatever all or any of us may or may not have been, we were not—with the exception of Mr. Clodd—good oars, and I think that we came within measurable distance of being swamped. At least we were all relieved both in body and mind when we made harbour safely—and that in spite of the fact that, in a discussion the night before, more than one of us had maintained that life was not worth living.

The expedition to Dorchester was altogether delightful, and our reception most gracious; but since the occasion was, by Mr. Hardy's stipulation, a private one, such it must remain, and I must content myself with praying that a benign fate may allow both the recipient of homage and the offerers of it to meet again on the 2nd June, 1930.

Within a month of that Whitsuntide party at Aldeburgh, Walter Besant died. His *Survey of London* must live, but I suppose that to most novel readers of to-day he is *nominis umbra*—or not even that. But it is not so with professional authors, and it would ill

become one who served under him on the committee of the Society of Authors, and had the honour to be among his successors in the chair, not to record a tribute to his memory; for he founded our Society which has done, and is doing, so much for our interests, our self-respect and independence. He was a lovable man, a hater of injustice, and lavish of his time, money, and energy in the thwarting of it. A true apostle! But (if the remark may be permitted) patience and cool judgment are not qualities invariably belonging to apostles, and when one of Besant's enthusiasms—or hates—came in by the door, his discretion was apt to go out by the window. Sometimes he had to be opposed by the committee of which he was the true and only creator. Under this opposition he continued to be patient—or to exhibit patience—with an obvious and touching effort. But men who can judge and control grow on many bushes; men who can inspire are rare blooms; only he who lives *non sibi sed reipublicæ* can inspire. Besant lived not for himself but for the republic of letters. He was our Garibaldi. Abiding honour is due to him from us.

## IX

### THE LURE OF THE THEATRE

I BELIEVE that there is hardly any writer who would not write plays if he could; and perhaps the same longing possesses many who are not writers at all, or, anyhow, only amateurs. At least one great statesman of the last generation was credited—truly or untruly—with having written one, and I certainly remember his expounding how one ought to be written to three dramatists, of whom I was the least. Very well indeed did he expound; but, alas, the grassy meadows of theory are not the same as the steep and rocky tracks of practice. The fact that an author's genius and method seem to most people unsuited to the drama by no means renders him immune from this desire. Henry James made no secret of his theatrical ambitions, and, indeed, had a play produced; but what critic would, on a study of his novels, dub him *à priori* a play-wright?

It was not likely then that I, from my youth up a lover of playgoing and once on a time a would-be actor, should escape. On the contrary, I have battered

at the stage-door in every conceivable way—well, except with “lyrics,” where a natural incapacity to hold a metre or to find a rhyme has effectually stopped me. I have written plays off my own bat and in collaboration; I have adapted my novels both with and without a partner; I have had my novels adapted by others, that I might at least get the thrill of the theatre vicariously and at second hand. And I think that I should have done just the same had the material rewards that await a successful playwright been as small as they are in fact enormous (not that they ever came my way to any great extent). Yet it is a difficult and tricky game, full of trials. When an author of any repute has written a book, his troubles are done; in the case of a play, by a man, in a parallel position, very often they are only begun. He can’t get it done in the way he wants or by the people he wants; or the people he wants won’t do it in the way he wants; or he can’t get the theatre he wants; or the manager, the producer, the leading lady, the leading man, and the scene-painter are one and all unable to understand what the deuce he does want—except, apparently, to make them do what they don’t want.

But these little rubs are as nothing beside the excitement of the enterprise and the thrill of success. Byron awoke and found himself famous; but even he did not,

with open eyes and listening ears, see and hear himself becoming famous, be an actual witness of his own power to amuse, to move, perhaps to terrify, or (best of all) have revealed to him by a gifted player what seems even to the author (vain man though he probably is!) a new beauty, or wit or power in what his own hand has written. The dim and distant applause of even a multitude of readers is no match for all that.

I suppose that these ecstasies are habitual in the lives of really successful dramatists; perhaps they get *blasés* over them. I have tasted of them only in a very small, sadly rare, and now very remote cup; and the goblet presented to my lips has more than once held liquor of a very different bouquet and flavour. I lacked skill in construction, and deft construction was more insisted upon then than it is now, when new masters have shown us that greater elasticity in form is consistent with dramatic effect. Accustomed to the freedom of the novel in matters of time and space, I chafed at the strait-waistcoat of three or four set scenes; better and more habile brains can adapt themselves to either medium without discomfort. Yet I look back on my assault on the theatre with pleasure and not too much dissatisfaction. I have two or three little things to boast of. When my good friend and most valued and valuable partner Edward Rose dramatised *The Prisoner*

of *Zenda*, adaptations of novels for the stage were quite out of favour; I doubt if there had been a really successful one (unless, perhaps, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, at the Lyceum—and there the play was not the thing!) since the days of Charles Reade. The great success of Rose's version of my story in America and at the St. James's—in the distinguished reign of George Alexander—brought them again into favour with the public, though the critics are always at war with the public in this matter. And I wrote a successful little comedy which pleased me as a pretty enough exercise in eighteenth-century dialogue—they did know how to talk in the eighteenth century!—and which still sometimes attracts the notice of ladies in search of a part where not only dramatic talent counts, but also a pretty leg! and an elegant covering for it; for they knew how to dress as well as to talk in the eighteenth century. In my humble and unfashionable opinion they also knew how to write prose better than anybody has known since—straight, lucid, clean-cut, without fireworks, antics, or obscurity.

*English Nell*—a stage version of my story *Simon Dale*, which Rose and I made together—holds for me a very pleasant reminiscence. I was lying on my sofa one day, in a vain and perhaps somnolent search for a new idea, when a knock came on the door. Being my own

janitor in Buckingham Street, I opened it, and Miss Marie Tempest walked in—to demand of me a play. She was then a triumphant figure in light opera—or ought I to say musical comedy?—and I was rather overwhelmed by the request. In fact, I shuffled, and protested that I had nothing worthy of her notice. But she would not take no for an answer, and at last I admitted the existence of a play about Nell Gwyn. The idea of it took her fancy; and in due time her brilliant performance of Nell took the fancy of the town. Thus was begun, not only for me, a long and pleasant friendship, but also her career on the “legitimate stage,” of which she has proved an ornament so great and indeed, in her own line, unrivalled.

English audiences do not much like political satires on the stage; perhaps they would like them better if the censor were not so careful of the feelings of our politicians (who are, after all, not so very careful of one another’s feelings), and thus apt to blunt the edge of the author’s sword, but in *Pilkerton’s Peerage* I scored something more than a *succès d'estime*, in spite of a faulty and weak “female interest,” which gave the ladies of the cast little opportunity, and threw almost the whole burden on the men, who, however, were brilliantly equal to it. Besides Arthur Bourchier himself in his best vein, H. V. Esmond and Sam Sothern

gave delicious performances, worthy of a much better play and equal to saving even a worse one. These two (both lost to the stage too soon—in Esmond's case a double loss, for he was, of course, a gifted playwright too) were among the finest of the younger comedians of recent years. Esmond excelled in giving the impetuosity, vivacity, and (when necessary) impudence of high-spirited youth; while Sam Sothern exploited on the stage, with infinite skill, a personality and a manner of a delightful drollness which belonged to him in private life also—a guileless and puzzled simplicity, and a patient bewilderment at the ways of the world. This mask hid a brain very shrewd in the affairs of real life.

So ends my short tally of dramatic success; never mind about the failures—the miscarriages, and the high rate of infant mortality. At all events, the incursion or campaign, however chequered in its fortunes, was eminently worth while on a broad view of life. It made me free of another world—a world full of human interest; it gave me many friends and infinite hours of pleasant company. Although social barriers have been broken down, and external peculiarities of life and manners are almost entirely a thing of the past (at least in London and in the higher grades of the pro-

fession—it might not be safe to press the generalization too far; Crummles and Tom Wrench may possibly still be met in the provinces), theatre people preserve a temperament, or a quality, of their own. I think that it consists in, or takes its rise from, a responsiveness, quicker than the ordinary, of mood and emotion, so that their likes and dislikes, hates and loves, griefs and enjoyments answer to the occasion and to the appeal of the moment with an especial readiness and unreserve. This is natural, as their occupation is, of necessity, a hothouse of emotion (so is the literary life to a considerable though lesser extent), but in social intercourse it results in a remarkable faculty for enjoyment. And people who are enjoying themselves—provided that they are pleasant and gracious, and not vulgar or aggressive, people—are an immense source of enjoyment to those who have the fortune to consort with them. They raise the social temperature, and it is a cold reptile whose blood does not warm in sympathy. Such seems to me the characteristic attraction of these “rogues and vagabonds.” If I add that they are, on an average, much better-looking than the common run of the human race—again according to the natural conditions of their profession—it is because this essentially unimportant matter counts for something

with "us poor human creatures." A thing of beauty may or may not be a joy for ever, but she certainly is one at a supper party.

Half a century of theatre-going cannot be catalogued here, and would make dull reading if it could; but a few personal impressions of great stage figures now departed may be allowed me; some of them I saw only on the boards; of one or two I enjoyed a closer view.

Among boyish memories two stand out. The first is of Sothern—the father of E. A. and Sam, I mean, of course—in *Lord Dundreary*. The inspired idiocy of that performance was a thing to see. At one point he was alone on the stage with an old lady who was knitting. Her ball of wool fell on the floor, as an old lady's ball of wool often will, and proceeded to run about the stage, unrolling itself as it went. (The old lady must have been clever too, for the ball accomplished astonishing gyrations.) Without a word, without a movement save the slightest of his head, Sothern watched it through his eyeglass with a grave absorbed curiosity, engrossed in the speculation as to what it was going to do next, serenely unconscious of the old lady's angry glare which upbraided him for the neglect of his obvious social duty under the circumstances. The house rocked with laughter, and would have gone on rocking as long as the actor pleased, at a

stupidity so immense, so glorious, and, strangely, even so perfectly polite; he seemed to compliment and thank the old lady for the performance of her ball of wool.

A second rich recollection is of Jefferson in *Rip Van Winkle*. Here was a case where the actor's highest claim for his profession was amply justified. Jefferson made most of the character which his author had, after all, merely sketched. He made the most adorable of rogues and drunkards, with an incomparable wealth of obfuscated humour.

But for these two great creations—for real creations of the actors they both were—the stage had to pay high. Sothern could never escape from *Dundreary*; Jefferson never escaped from *Rip*. Years and years later, when I was myself touring as a public entertainer in the United States, I met him at Hartford, still playing *Rip*. I could not see him because I had to be on my own platform—before rather an empty house—everybody had gone to see *Rip*!—but was consoled by a very kind invitation to sup with him and his company—who were mostly junior members of his own family—and a very jolly party. It appeared that a “farewell tour” of Jefferson in *Rip* was an annual event keenly anticipated and appreciated by generation after generation of American children. But if the two men had not been thus hopelessly enmeshed in their

own triumphs, they must have made much more theatrical history.

Another figure comes to mind. I saw Ristori play Lady Macbeth, in London. She was old, she was stout, she was, alas, no longer beautiful, as I was told that she had been. But there was no mistaking her quality. In the sleep-walking scene—it is that which stands out in my memory—she did not aim at the beautiful, no, nor even at the pitiful. Walking blindly and hesitatingly, speaking brokenly between stertorous breathings so loud and difficult that only a fear of turning the sublime into the ridiculous prevents one from saying plainly that she snored, she aimed at terror and terror only, and created it—moral terror at the sight of a soul so heavy with the guilt of blood that its bodily tenement could no more support the weight of it.

Beside this performance may be set Salvini's Othello. But here, in spite of the great actor's physical violence—it was really difficult to see how Desdemona could come through without actual bodily hurt—pity held its own and, indeed, predominated over any other emotion. The play is to me always so distressing that I cannot see it even with the quality of pleasure which is proper to tragedy. Salvini made it almost unbearable. That such a great gentleman should be so befooled! One's emotion sought primitive expression, and one

left the theatre declaring that the whole thing was just a damned shame. And poor Desdemona's fate was reduced to significance.

To anyone interested in the theatre Irving's management at the Lyceum is so well known a page of history that I touch on it only from a personal point of view. From early days I was an ardent devotee, and many hours did I spend in that passage off the Strand, waiting to get into the pit on a first night; on more than one occasion only to be disappointed and to come away half-heartbroken. In later years I had the luck to be one of the many (How many, I wonder! It seemed as though we were hundreds) who were made free of the house. We could walk in when we liked and ask for the seats we wanted; if they were to be had, we had them; if not, we could stand up at the back of the dress circle. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that we could use the theatre as a club—a club without a subscription, for Bram Stoker always intimated that any suggestion of paying would seriously wound Sir Henry's feelings. We had our seats at first nights as a matter of course—and a splendid "blow out" on the stage afterwards for all of us and for the members of the profession who came flocking in after their own work at other houses was finished. If there are any such theatres now, I, alas, am not on their free list. I doubt

if there are. Some worldly-wise folk would have it that all this was done as a matter of policy—to conciliate the critics and to impress the public. I think that this was considerably less than half the truth. Irving was by nature magnificent; the big way of doing things appealed to him; he was King of the London Stage, and royalty must act royally. The same trait of character came out in what was a good deal criticised (and would be more to-day) by austere Shakespeare enthusiasts—the lavishness of his "productions." Here, again, he was at least as much giving expression to his taste and temperament as consulting his interests. Things at the Lyceum had to be done as they had never been done before.

Irving would have proved himself a great man in any line of life; and he was a great actor mainly because he was a great man. Sir Squire Bancroft once said that his idea of a good actor was a man who could play all the male parts in *The School for Scandal* well—and equally well. Irving could not have passed that test. A perfect Joseph Surface—and a wonderful little performance as Moses! But—to say the least of it—an unexpected sort of Charles! He was not a supreme impersonator. But if skill makes a fine actor, personality makes a great one. Even when he was indifferently suited by his part, Irving always had—if the expression

may be allowed—"a card up his sleeve"—a great moment, the rendering of some great line, even a poise of his body or the dawn of an expression on his face, which forced an even excellence to take the second place.

As a manager he was, I believe, not only a despot (every good manager has to be that) but a Tartar; it was the old tradition, and in his case, apparently, if you got it hot, you also got it amusingly. And here again his generosity was amazing; he had a "Salary list" which would have appalled a modern "Unlimited Theatres Company Limited"; when once on it, you were on it for life, if you chose—or so I have been told on pretty good authority. But you had to do as he liked, not as you liked. He seems to have justified Diderot's Paradox, for he would sometimes carry on an incisive *sotto voce* (and not always so very *sotto* either. I have overheard some of it once or twice from a stage box) criticism of his partner in a scene, even while he held the house enthralled by the perplexities of Hamlet or the wiles of Mephistopheles. The Paradox, by the way, seems to me to contain a truth, but a truth overstated and so failing of complete truth. The actor neither loses himself in his part, nor stands outside his part as a cool and critical observer of his own methods and their result. It is a case of double con-

sciousness. A writer experiences just the same sort of thing; he dots his i's, crosses his t's, or regulates the printer's commas even while his heart groans for the woes of his heroine.

I was several times Irving's guest at supper in the old Beefsteak room at the Lyceum; he knew that I was a friend of his sons, and to this I was probably indebted for more of these invitations than I could otherwise have hoped for. In private intercourse he exchanged the gracious and courtly manner which he had at command on public or semi-public occasions for one that was more dry and indeed a trifle curt. He was not a great talker, but his remarks, when they came, had always a point—and sometimes a sting; and he always gave an indisputable impression of being the first, or among the very first, of the company, however distinguished it might be. And as being among the very first of the notable company of English actors theatrical history and tradition will without question record him. Of the lady who shared and so greatly enhanced his achievements, and will share in the memory of them, and who still, happily, graces the life of London if not its stage, I could speak, if I spoke at all, only in such terms as would probably cause her, if her eye happened to fall on them, to wink at the nearest bystander as she winked at me under the fire of Mr.

Meredith's compliments; or perhaps, unable to emulate him, I should find myself bereft of words.

Some six-and-twenty years ago it fell to my enviable, though somewhat alarming, lot to preside at a huge lunch party given in honour of Sarah Bernhardt, and to propose her health. I was in trepidation not least because my French is absolutely contemptible and her English was, I knew, non-existent—at least, the only English words I ever heard from her were “I thank you from my heart”—but I would not refuse such an opportunity of meeting the famous lady, and, perhaps, of airing my oratory on such an engaging theme. The difficulty of language was got over, so far as the speech was concerned, by my writing it out in English (and learning it by heart, as my custom was on occasions which were important—important to me, I mean) and by Miss Rockman, an American friend of Madame Sarah's, making a French translation of it, which was placed beside the guest's napkin on the table.

Lunch was at one—an early hour which had the advantage of enabling Lord Balfour (he was Mr. Balfour then, and, I think, Leader of the House of Commons) to accept an invitation to be present. He came with laudable punctuality; but Madame Sarah didn't! There ensued a feverish hour; telephone messages flew from the Cecil where we were to the Carlton

where she was; Madame was preparing; Madame's carriage (it was the famous one, drawn by two yellowish mules) was at the door; Madame was on the point of leaving her apartment; Madame had left her apartment; Madame was entering her carriage; Madame was actually on the way. Meanwhile the company of three hundred felt rather forlorn and hungry, and Mr. Balfour glanced at his watch.

However she came at last, and all went very well. If my trepidation was increased by the prospect of having Mr. Balfour among my listeners, on the other hand I was comforted by the thought that he, sitting on Madame Sarah's other side, could hold her in converse during lunch. He did; I overheard animated fragments of a talk about General Boulanger, the while I conned my speech once again. I delivered it. The occasion was naturally not one for criticism, nor even for any economy in praise. I did not make any such mistake—and, out of the corner of my eye, I saw our guest following my words in the French translation with a contented air. When I sat down, she said "*Vous parlez bien!*" I was rewarded. I got no compliment from Mr. Balfour because, owing to the proceedings beginning at two o'clock instead of at one, he had been obliged to depart before I spoke—with graceful apologies on his part—and secret relief on mine. Otherwise

I should have got a compliment—but I might have distrusted it.

I was further rewarded—and very handsomely—by an invitation to supper at the Carlton two or three days later. Besides the hostess, the company consisted of three French ladies—all Countesses, I think—Miss Rockman, two very large greyhounds named Cyrano and Roxane, and myself. We sat down at one o'clock and talked (I with Miss Rockman's help as interpreter) till well past three—and Madame Sarah appeared to be genuinely grieved when I made a move then. She had played twice that day—*Hamlet* and *L'Aiglon*, I think—and must have been in the theatre hard on twelve hours. But she showed not the smallest sign of fatigue, and about three o'clock launched into a long and animated account of how the day was spent at her beloved country place at Belle Isle; the day began with lawn tennis at six in the morning, and included the reading aloud of two new plays, one before lunch and another after dinner—with more lawn tennis and bathing interspersed! Yet she was, of course, at this time by no means young.

That is, not young in years. In all essentials she appeared to be youth itself; full of life and vivacity (quite free from skittishness, though), eager in talk, very feminine in spite of her forcefulness, and with

great charm; in fact, a really notable creature whom it was good to see and hear at close quarters. It is with her as with Irving; they stand out as memorable people, and would so stand even if they had never spoken a word upon the stage.

I can endure and enjoy a tragedy—with one or two exceptions, as I have hinted—as well as any other honest playgoer, provided that it is a tragedy, and not merely a slab of dreariness in which people moan and moon about, bewailing their own helplessness; for surely to make great tragedy you must have a human spirit with some strength in it, with something that puts up a good fight against fate, and bravely—in virtue or in crime, in ambition or in love—defies the stars, even when it is beaten to its knees. Yet, while acknowledging the spell of true tragedy as I conceive it—perhaps my doctrine is out of date—I find, when I look back, that it is to comedies and comedians that my heart goes out in greater gratitude. They cheat the ills of our mortal state; they make us forget death and all our woes. And how rich the English stage has been in comedians! (A rather odd thing, perhaps, since we are supposed to be a gloomy and phlegmatic people.) How rich—and how various in talent and method—even in living memory, as it ranges from Lady Bancroft's inimitable gaiety to Charles Hawtrey's men-

dacious smiles, from the polished assurance of a Charles Wyndham to the sheer drollery of a "Beetle" Kemble. They and many of their fellows live in our grateful remembrance, and their worthy successors are with us still.

As years creep on us, sometimes a book by the fireside, or even—I speak with shame—a gossip with other fogies over pipes, seems preferable to sallying forth to the theatre. Lamentable and unromantic decadence! Even though it rain, even though we have a cold, even though gyratory traffic threaten our lives, let us bravely sally forth to seek the old delights. Let us die, as we have lived, good playgoers!

## X

### THE WIDER STAGE

**I**T MAY seem absurd or impertinent for one who has had only a distant view, or, at most, stray meetings and casual glimpses, of prominent public men to write anything about them when there are still living so many who knew them intimately and have worked in close relation with them. Yet such encounters have added so much to the interest of life that it is difficult to resist jotting a few of them down, in the hope that they may recall or reveal something characteristic or add perhaps one little touch to pictures already painted full length by other hands.

I am even tempted to summon up a few mere visions, because they remain such vivid ones; as of the famous Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, presenting to me the first school prize I ever won with a grace and almost a deference which immensely impressed the small recipient; of Cardinal Manning in the pulpit clad all in white, with his mitre on his head and his pastoral staff in his hand; I remember nothing of what he said but he made, I think, the stateliest figure that

I have ever seen; of Liddon, also stately in the pulpit (and with a wonderful voice), but not so stately as he took his afternoon airing on the Embankment; a shortish stocky man, with tubular trousers, and his initials burnt (yes, burnt) very large on a very seedy umbrella—an excess of precaution as it seemed to me; of Spurgeon preaching and praying—his praying was (at least to one bred in the formal ways of the Establishment) almost a shocking, and yet a most forceful and moving, thing with its intimate, colloquial, and yet passionate appeals to his stern Deity; of Cardinal Vaughan, stately again like Manning, but with a more mundane stateliness, magnificent in full robes, exchanging—at the Academy Dinner—a polite but rather official handshake with Archbishop Temple; His Eminence hoped that His Grace was very well, and His Grace hoped the same for His Eminence; these titles, not in their essence ecclesiastical, saved the two dignitaries from any doctrinal commitments.

Or—to pass from ecclesiastics, for whom I have always felt an attraction, the attraction of opposites, perhaps, and to one or two of whom I may return—I see Lord Salisbury (I had seen him before in the pomp of his black and gold as Chancellor of Oxford) as Prime Minister at a Lord Mayor's Banquet, with his fine and massive head, and his no less massive frame (clad in

silken Court integuments), passing in procession up Guildhall, with the Lady Mayoress's Maids of Honour in attendance. It looked, to an eye not, I trust, profane, rather like a Greek frieze of a magnificent bull being led to sacrifice with maidens dancing and piping on the way; and Lord Salisbury's face, as he passed the outlying table where I was to sit, looked rather as the bull's might be expected to look if he divined the true meaning of the picturesque proceedings.

I am reluctant to run the risk of being told—after publication—that this section of my memories ought to have been called “People I have never met”—not a bad title, though, for some books of “reminiscences” which have been presented to the public—but I must be allowed to drag in Disraeli. I believe that I saw him, or a part of him, once in the corner of a railway carriage at a Buckinghamshire station when I was a biggish boy; at all events the porter said that the great man was in there, and I sidled up to the window and pried in. But a newspaper hid the occupant's face. However his form and features were, from pictures and caricatures, as familiar as though I had seen him a hundred times. More than that, he had been a great figure—or fact—in my very early political thinking. We were Zoroastrians in the 'Seventies, and the opposing Spirits of

Good and Evil—Ormuzd and Ahriman—were Disraeli and Gladstone—or Gladstone and Disraeli, as the case might be. For me, as I have indicated on an earlier page, Ormuzd was Gladstone, and I had already seen him when, being on a visit at Savernake House, he came and addressed the boys at Marlborough. Naturally I was alert to see Ahriman too; has not there always been a terrible fascination about “raising the Devil” in bodily shape? Alas, if I raised him at all, it was very imperfectly; I saw no more than a part of his greatcoat and trousers. I am afraid that for us to-day there are no such complete incarnations of all that is good and of all that is bad. We see spots on every sun, and even—if we are of a sanguine temper—a silver lining to the Labour cloud. And even if Mr. Baldwin be Ormuzd to an imposing majority, the office of Ahriman is an object of active and bewildering competition.

Naturally, as I grew towards maturity, my view of Disraeli underwent revision, and I came to recognize his attraction as well as his genius, but this did not save me from the accusation of having “put” him, a few years after his death, into one of my books (*Quis-anté* by name), and of having been led by political prejudice into attributing to him, as depicted in my novel, one or two very shady actions. I had perhaps

exposed myself to the charge, for I did owe the first idea of the book to a very interesting conversation in which the late Lord Chaplin described to me the statesman's early relations with the Bentinck brothers—how they "took him up" and aided his political career; but the character of my hero—or villain, for I aimed at making him a bit of both—was in no way meant to represent or reflect Disraeli's. However, even had it been otherwise, it hardly lay in the mouth of Disraeli, or of his devotees, to object. He had put "real people" into his books often enough, under very penetrable disguises and not, one would suppose, always to their pleasure or to the satisfaction of their friends. By the way, Lord Rowton once told me that Disraeli used to reproach him for not thinking highly enough of his "works of the imagination," and that he always spoke of his novels under that description. I should like to speak of mine in the same way; but I am afraid that somebody would laugh.

Lord Rowton was a delightful man and an ardent and very practical philanthropist. But he had a horror of indiscriminate charity. Once when we were walking away from a friend's house together, we were accosted and pursued by an importunate beggar. I wanted to get rid of him, and resume our conversation without interruption at the cost of sixpence. But Rowton, squeezing

my arm which he had taken, said quite fiercely, "If you do, I'll drop your arm and walk off in the opposite direction."

Of course I yielded to his threat. But such stern virtue is not always easy to observe. I remember that once, somewhere in Italy (Siena, I think) Owen Seaman and I, on our way to visit a church, were haunted and pestered by a singularly impudent and dirty little beggar-boy. We drove him away with evil words such as are supposed to—but seldom do—put Italian mendicants to flight. While in the church, we learnt the history of its patron saint. It appeared that he won canonization mainly because he was the only person in all the city who gave of his charity to a beggar so repulsive in appearance that all others turned from him in horror and without relieving his distress. On receipt of the pious priest's alms, the beggar revealed himself as a Divine Personage. When we came out, the dirty and impudent little boy was still there and resumed his shrill demands. We looked at one another, in doubt. It did not seem likely; but still——! Each of us put his hand in his pocket and produced small coins, on which the boy fastened eagerly. But nothing else happened. I wonder if the rascal knew the story and with precocious acumen haunted the precincts of that particular church.

Another case in which I was charged with "putting in" a real person was that of my book *The God in the Car*, where Ruston, the leading character, was declared to be Cecil Rhodes. Indeed I was told that somebody, being under that impression, sent Rhodes the book to read, and that, after reading it, he returned it with the remark, "I'm not such a brute as that." The truth here was much the same as with Disraeli and Quisanté. I took a man inspired with the ideas with which Rhodes was supposed to be inspired and doing the sort of work which he was credited with doing (Empire-building is the phrase for it to-day); but the character of Ruston was constructed independently of that of Rhodes, especially in regard to the intimate relationships of private life, with which the novel was primarily concerned. Indeed I could hardly have taken any personal traits from Rhodes, for I had, when I wrote the book, never seen him or even heard about him from anybody who knew him well. I did meet him once later on—when he came home to give evidence before the Jameson Raid Committee—and had a talk with him. I recorded my impression—a first impression which I am prepared to be told was quite a wrong one—in the following words—"He is decidedly notable: less grim than he is represented; strong, a dreamer, a touch of the Gascon, engrossed in his work, impatient

with the views imposed on others by their work; an attractive as well as an interesting person, though." Right or wrong, this impression, while fitting in with my hero's character in some ways, is a more human and pleasant one; and Rhodes was thus justified in his remark.

As regards this question—which is always cropping up—it is plain that a novelist must get his human material, his characters, from somewhere, and he can only get it from people he has met or heard about. But unless he desires either to compliment someone he admires by an ideal portrait, or to scarify someone he dislikes by a satirical one, he will be wise to disguise his sources. Give to the person whose essential character, as you conceive it, you desire to portray, changed circumstances, a different personal appearance, perhaps a few unimportant mannerisms not possessed by the original; under this disguise you can generally use all that you want to use, and no one will be the wiser as to where you got it. In that way you will be safe from blame. But you will not create as much gossip and amusement; nor will you create such satirical portraits as we should be sorry not to have had from Disraeli, Thackeray, and other great authors. On the whole, I am inclined to think that we are a little too squeamish about the matter now.

I had seen Mr. Gladstone from the far end of a very large hall at Marlborough, and once or twice, from hardly less far off, at big political parties to which I was bidden in my quality of Parliamentary aspirant, and from the gallery of the House of Commons; but once only did I sit at meat with him and hear him talk in private company; yet even such a glimpse of him seems worth recording.

I owed it to Canon and Mrs. Basil Wilberforce, who kindly invited me to lunch to meet him in 1895. Arch-bishop Benson and Mrs. Benson were there too, but, in spite of my confessed clerical proclivities, my ears were all for the hero of my boyhood. I had the good luck to sit next but one to him, and could hear all he said—to my confusion in one respect, as will appear shortly. Indeed, with that voice of his—not loud but so full and carrying—it was easy for the whole company to hear. Our host was an ardent teetotaller, and—to his honour be it said—was no respecter of persons in this matter. On the table, besides water, there were small carafes of lemonade. The lady who sat between him and me offered him this beverage. “No,” said he, taking hold of a jug of water, “I drink this when I can’t get anything better.” I fear that the hostess—on his right hand—must have heard this booming aside, but possibly she was happily engrossed with the Arch-

bishop. Then Mr. Gladstone began to discourse on the question whether animals other than human are happier than human animals. He decided that they were: "They have very little memory or anticipation, and their lives being short makes no difference, since they do not anticipate death." It was rather pathetic, in view of his advanced years, that this point should occupy his mind. Yet he seemed well and hearty, and made an excellent lunch.

Presently—and here comes my painful memory of an otherwise treasured occasion—his eyes (fine eyes with wonderful life and fire in them even then) travelled round the table and came to me—the only person there whom he did not know, I think. He asked the lady between us about me. He was very deaf, and my name (or names—I mistakenly contracted an alias early in life and have never been able to get rid of it) had to be communicated in a loud voice. It conveyed nothing to him; no more did the names of some half-dozen of my books which, in obedience to his orders, the lady—amused, yet for my sake distressed and sympathetic—shouted into his ear. I can hear the titles now! He repeated each one as he heard it—in that booming undertone—and shook his head. All at the table could not but listen—and I heartily wished myself under it. Evidently he was quite unconscious that I could over-

hear or was overhearing anything of all this distressing conversation.

After lunch I was presented to him, and he gave me a most gracious little audience. All I remember of what passed is that he told me that Grant Allen had sent him a copy of his novel, *The Woman Who Did*—a book which was very famous in its day, and which may be regarded as the forerunner of the modern feminist novel which we all know, and which so many of us have written since. “An honest book,” Mr. Gladstone said, “but I was puzzled with my letter of thanks. I sent him my best wishes, adding that they would be very different for him from what he probably wished for himself.” I am sure that Mr. Gladstone meant this kindly, but the words do not exclude a severe dose of purgatory for Grant Allen.

Mr. Gladstone was generally accused of being circumlocutory, but if a story told to me (it is only hearsay, I admit, but the source was good) be true, he could be straight and downright when he wished. Talking of Disraeli, he said that his best speeches were the anti-Free Trade ones, with which he attacked Peel. Being asked whether he thought that Disraeli believed in his case, he replied, “On the contrary, sir, he had an active and intelligent belief the other way.” Doctor Johnson himself could hardly better that.

I admit to a weakness for a well-sounding sentence (for words are my substitute for a music of which I have no—or the most rudimentary—appreciation) irrespective of its truth or logical validity. Once I listened to a theological argument between Mrs. Humphry Ward and the well-known Father Black, in his day one of Rome's most valued captures from the Church of England, and a very kind and pleasant man (he once wellnigh saved my life by lending me a rug on a drenching and freezing Channel passage). They failed to agree—as was to be expected; and Mrs. Ward, well up in the Higher Criticism and especially a disciple of an eminent German critic, exclaimed “I take my stand on Harnack!” “I take mine,” said Black, “on the Holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church.” Merits apart, the Reverend Father certainly sounded more impressive. Verbally it was a win on points, but Mrs. Ward did not confess to a “knock-out.” With her usual calm graciousness, she requested her antagonist to fetch her a cup of tea. Perhaps that was a retort, too, in its way. Father Black was good—for something!

I was bidden two or three times to Lord Avebury's “breakfasts” at his house in St. James's Square. These entertainments demanded a little effort and sacrifice; to be at one's social best at nine-thirty in the morning—when slippers and the newspaper seem more appropri-

ate—is not easy, and moreover, whatever other good fare might figure on the menu, tobacco did not; but the invitations were not to be refused, for interesting conversation was a certainty. To give just one instance; a keen and, to tell the truth, rather a heated debate arose between Lord Kelvin and Mark Twain (in private life, of course, Mr. Samuel L. Clemens). The great man of science maintained that no nation—whether civilized, backward, or primitive—was entitled to refuse to other nations two rights—the right to travel and the right to trade in its territory. The great writer roundly denied that either right existed, or could be demanded or enforced without injustice and oppression. They argued and argued until (as so often happens in argument) each disputant forced the other into what is probably an indefensible position, Kelvin being pushed to averring that the rights which he championed could properly be enforced by war, Mark Twain to maintaining that foreign travellers and traders had no claim to protection from their own country against any attack on their lives or property. Nobody likes to be pushed to the extreme limits of his logic, and I am afraid that I cannot end with the amiable *cliché* that they parted the best of friends. They were both distinctly angry.

Mark Twain was indeed, beneath his rich and wilfully extravagant humour, a thorough-going sen-

timentalist. The under-dog might not be a pretty dog, but Mark was for it, just because it was the under-dog; it is a fallacy of feeling to which sentimentalists (of whom I am one) are exposed. But his talk—I encountered him several times both in London and in New York—was delightfully whimsical and individual. The only drawback was that his natural drawl—freely punctuated, moreover, by his perpetual cigar being constantly put into and constantly taken out of his mouth—made his utterance terribly slow. While waiting in a faithful and always justified hope that the point would come, you were reduced to admiring his magnificent head, leonine, with a snow-white mane. At his best he is a great writer, but his worst is terribly far below his best; that is a danger to which humorists are peculiarly exposed; Laurence Sterne proves it no less than Mark Twain.

Besides Lord Avebury's breakfasts, there was another famous institution in the way of meals—Sir Henry Thompson's "Octaves." These were dinners, with eight men always as guests, making with the host nine at a round table, and men whose presence ensured good talk. But, before that began, there was a little ritual—an account from the host (who himself ate next to nothing and drank water) of the meats we were to eat and the wines we were to drink—where the salmon

had swum, what hills or downs the mutton had ranged, where the pig had roamed and rooted (there was always a hot ham), the year and *cuvée* of the champagne, the almost legendary history of the port and brandy. He made it all very interesting, as connoisseurs can make their hobbies, and well whetted our appetites.

Thompson, a handsome man of very pleasant and gentle manners, was a famous surgeon, and had been called in to operate on Napoleon III in his last illness at Chislehurst. What was of closer interest to me, he had (as he told me himself) Thackeray among his patients, and had taken him into his own house for observation—he said nothing about an actual operation—for two or three weeks. In his professional capacity—yet, as I gathered, not too seriously—he asked the illustrious patient: “About how many bottles of wine do you drink in a year, Mr. Thackeray?” Thackeray affected to think. “Well—roughly—about five hundred, Mr. Thompson.” The doctor looked grave—or as grave as he could—and the patient added, in depreciation of imminent rebuke, “But it’s almost all other people’s wine, you know.”

Thompson has another title to fame; he was the founder, or prominent among the founders, of the Cremation Society, and his bust is to be seen in the Crematorium at Golders Green. Whenever I have sad

occasion to visit that place, and when my wandering eyes light on his familiar features, a vagrant and naughty memory carries me away from where I am and what I am doing, and back to Thackeray and his five hundred bottles of other people's wine, and the joys of an "Octave" dinner.

## XI

### LONDON MIXTURE

A NOTABLE link between the literary and the clerical world was the then Bishop of London, Dr. Mandell Creighton, who, out of episcopal hours, was a frequenter of the Athenæum. Nor were his literary tastes too severe; he was a great novel reader—in English, French, and even Spanish, and his conversation, delightful as it was, had the unfortunate effect of making me feel desperately ignorant even of my own little patch in the field of literature. His *History of the Papacy* is one of the most interesting books which I have ever read; he invests the intrigues of a Conclave with all the excitement of a detective story (“Who is going to be Pope?” the reader cries) and his sketches of the great personalities of Renaissance times are fascinating. He himself recalled a great Renaissance churchman and patron of letters—Aeneas Sylvius (without the youthful indiscretions, of course), or Bessarion—with his grave clean-cut features, his careful beard, his dignified suave manner. We had a special point of union in a cult for Queen Elizabeth

—not for the “Good Queen Bess” of legend, but for the strange tortuous woman—and he exhorted me to write a novel about her. I had not the learning—nor, probably, the wits—for this difficult task, but I did, in later years, essay a modernized miniature of the Great Queen in my story *The Great Miss Driver*. But, alas, the author of the suggestion was no longer there to receive—as I know that he would have done kindly—a grateful dedication.

Lord Curzon was, of course, besides all else that he was, a very accomplished writer, but it was not until I chanced to sail home on the same boat with him from Madeira that I discovered—or rather my wife discovered, for it was she who, sharing the taste, drew him out one fine day on deck in the Bay—that he had a passion for crime. They sat swapping murders for two or three hours, while I, having stolen up surreptitiously, listened in the background. They licked their lips over each abominable atrocity as though it were Pommery 1900!

This admiration for the art of eliminating inconvenient fellow-creatures (for mere killing in hot blood does not count for connoisseurs) was shared to the full by my old friend Harry Irving. Distinguished as an actor—he could be no less with the blood that was in him—he would probably have gone even further had

he stuck to his first love, the Bar; for his heart was really in criminology, and he wrote of it with marvellous gusto. We were great friends, and he was an admirable companion, with a rather malicious humour in anecdote and debate; his sly smile constantly led up to good things. Yet, as I sat talking to him, I could not avoid the conviction that he would much sooner have been conversing with Dr. Pritchard, Neil Cream, or Crippen. However there are prices too high to pay for even the pleasantest social intercourse. I like to oblige my friends, but on this side of murder—and its penalty.

The fascination of murder even for superior minds cannot be denied in face of the two instances that have just been mentioned; and, indeed, the subject gives rise to very curious psychological problems, worthy of the acutest intellects. But the peculiar atmosphere that pervades the court when a trial for murder is going on has, in the main, an emotional rather than an intellectual origin; that it exists is, I think, undoubted; it infects even the Bar, which is, as a rule, only moderately interested in cases in which it is not briefed. And the emotion tends to centre not on the fact that a dead man has been killed—a man whom you never saw and who tends to become merely a starting-point in the case (as he is in most detective fiction)—but on the probability that a living breathing man who stands

there, visible and in the midst, will be killed in a very little while, and is now fighting a losing battle against the formidable machinery of the law. Hence there is apt to occur an illicit transference of sympathy, which infects the spectators—and the readers of newspapers—and may infect the jury, unless it is checked and corrected by a strong Judge. Such a Judge will keep the figure and fate of the victim before the jury's eyes, so that, if on the evidence the prisoner be plainly guilty, that conclusion may not be deflected by the inevitable pity for the trapped quarry there in the dock. The feeling is, of course, quite legitimate within bounds. In two cases of murder—plain and brutal murder—it has been my duty, as Judge's Marshal, secretly to convey the black cap—which must on no account be seen until the verdict of "Guilty" has been given—to the Judge, and, though not opposed to capital punishment, I must confess that I handled that sinister square of black cloth with considerable distaste.

Another man of more than literary distinction—of genius, for surely to do an entirely original thing in a perfect way is genius if anything is—who was keenly interested in crime and criminals was W. S. Gilbert. I once took a house within a few miles of his place, Grimsdyke, in Hertfordshire, and also very closely adjacent to the scene of the famous murder of William

Weare by Thurtell and his accomplices. This particular association with the locality we were rather ready to forget, but not many days had passed before Gilbert came over to see us, armed with a volume containing a full and circumstantial account of the hideous transaction. This he recommended, with a grim smile, for evening reading, and added the agreeable information that on a certain night in the year the drama was re-enacted in ghostly fashion close to our gates. In reply to anxious enquiries—for the reason is not always sovereign—he confessed that the night of this spectral performance lay outside the term of our tenancy. “But,” he added, obviously enjoying the perturbation which he detected, “they might make a mistake in the date, of course.” Yes, or “they” might take a fancy to do it every night, for all we knew or could know to the contrary!

This piquant malice characterised his conversation. It was full of wit, but his interlocutors had to be content to run the risk of being “scored off”; if you exposed yourself, he pounced, and you found yourself likely to play the rôle of victim in a “good story”—as in the often quoted but typical case of the editor of *Punch* (not the present editor) who, admitting, in reply to an insidious question that he received many funny contributions from outside quarters, was met by “Why

don't you ever put in any of them?" This was before the written matter contributed by the regular staff was identified by their initials.

I have spoken on an earlier page of the gulf between "esoteric" and "popular" literature in the 'Nineties (a rough division, of course, which it was given to a few great men to overleap). Andrew Lang, whose name I hold in grateful remembrance, was in a way a link between the two. On the one hand the literary exquisites could not deny that he shared to the full in their culture and their fastidiousness; on the other he championed the sort of thing the ordinary man likes to read—novels of rapid narrative, stirring incident, and normal emotions—drawing the line only at exaggerated sentiment and solemn preachiness. Indeed he himself collaborated with two distinguished writers of "adventure stories," my friends Haggard and Mason, and to me he was most kind both in private company and in public reference; he praised my *Prisoner of Zenda*, soon after it came out, at the Academy Banquet —what finer advertisement could a budding author desire? Well, I was at Oxford, a sure passport to his favour; for he was the most thorough-going Oxonian that I have ever met. Indeed I sometimes think that he was the original inventor of the "Oxford Manner" which, as all the world knows, has become so prevalent

since, and has even been intensified (so I am told—I can be no judge in the matter) in the "Balliol Manner." He doubted much whether any good could come out of any Nazareths, and once solemnly (not really very solemnly, I think) told me that two Oxonian novelists—of whom I have named one and will not name the other—were the only two of the craft who could really write English! He was of Oxford, too, in his pleasant self-depreciation, and in the graceful affectation that the work which we were all at—and which he was pursuing so hard and so brilliantly—was of no account, not to be talked about; the real business of life was cricket, and, if you wanted to relax your mind from that, you could play golf or go fishing. Any assumption that your work, or his work, or anybody's work was of high importance seemed to him an indecent exposure of inner emotions. His was a charming and individual personality, to which even his affections properly belonged or, at all events, were very artistically affixed.

The "Victorian Age"—really a nickname which includes so much that it means nothing—is to-day in the curious position of having to vindicate its immortality. Such an intolerable primness is attributed to it that survivors dating from it are moved to protest that we had our faults and frailties, and our pleasant vices. Certainly we who were young or middle-aged men in

the late years of the Queen's reign did not consider our-selves prim, and would have resented bitterly the idea of going down to posterity as a pack of prigs—which seems to be the impression of us among some of the young folk of these days. It is true that public men convicted of sexual immorality were not considered suitable as Ministers of the Crown or leaders of Parties, but, if a parallel case arose to-day, I doubt whether the sentence would be any less lenient. I cannot speak of the "atmosphere of the Court" because I never came within its ambit, but the common run of London society had, I think, much the same standards as the common run now, while the "Bohemians" of that period claimed and exercised a greater freedom or licence corresponding pretty well to that indulged in by their present successors. Certainly in clubs men habitually sat up later and drank more than, constrained by the law and frightened by the doctors, they do now; and young men who wanted to dance into the small hours frequented resorts which could not be surpassed—I doubt if they could be equalled, though I will not ignorantly dogmatise—by any that are now in existence; indeed it is a gain that, although some of our "night clubs" are open to aspersions, there are others where a young man can take a reputable partner and enjoy blameless pleasure; such places were very

rare, if there were any at all, in the 'Eighties and 'Nineties.

"We know," it will be objected to me, "that men have always been immoral creatures. But what about the women and girls? That is the crux of the question." The objection puts me in a little difficulty, for I am far from desiring to give the women and girls of my own generation a bad character. But if it were permissible to name names—which quite obviously it is not—I think that I could reel off a string of them that would refute the charge of primness and prudery at all events; how much further the recital might carry the argument is a question which it is, I think, discreet to drop.

So much in vindication of the wickedness of my own generation—a vindication necessary for the reasons that have been indicated. It is beyond the scheme of these notes to discuss the wickedness of the present-day generation. But one observation may be permitted—and may be applied to cases where it may chance to be applicable. If you claim the right to please yourself in following your own inclinations and convictions, well and good; it is your look-out. But you have no right to blame, or to call intolerant, people who, while perhaps having their human share of your inclinations, are steadfastly opposed to your convictions. You have a right to convert the world at large to your views, if

you can. You have no right to revile it because it is not converted; if you do that, you are being guilty of just as much intolerance as you impute to it. It is the old story—you cannot have things both ways. If you choose the joys of irregularity, you must risk losing the rewards of regularity. It is unreasonable to expect both.

We are all accustomed to other people growing old and dying; that these processes should be applied to ourselves seems a little strange and difficult to realise. But the former, at least, is brought home to me when I remember, in connection with the subject which I have been touching upon, how often I have talked with the author of the famous articles on "The Girl of the Period." These articles dated from a social generation before mine, and I confess that I have never read them, but I have always understood that they were very scathing. Nothing could have been less scathing or alarming than Mrs. Lynn Linton herself. She was the gentlest old lady, and, however she may have expressed herself as to the girl of her own period, she had plenty of indulgence for the girl—and boy—of mine, and would listen, with a twinkle in her eyes, to any little stories illustrating the fashions and follies of the day; and to her juniors in the business of writing she showed a most appreciative generosity.

Two other women writers, veterans and honoured by us of the craft, were Miss Braddon and Rhoda Broughton. The former (Mrs. Maxwell in private life, and mother of a son very distinguished in the same craft) maintained a high and remarkably even level through a great many books and a great many years. She did not deal in views or theories, but was, first and last, a teller of stories, and a very good one. Her construction—her workmanship—was admirable; deft, compact, and never careless; and in this respect her last book was as good as her first. I remember her as a very charming and serene presence. Rhoda Broughton had a sharper edge to her, and a satiric flavour in her talk as well as in her books, which had shocked the staid among a previous generation of readers by the freedom with which amatory emotions were ascribed to youthful heroines. Certainly her *Belinda* had caused flutterings in the dovecotes of Oxford (where she lived for many years), since distinguished persons, well-known there, were supposed to figure in it, less disguised than I have suggested that, for safety's sake, such people should be in a work that professes to be imaginative. I think that she cherished the memory of having been the "last word" in advanced fiction, and looked with an amused eye on those of her successors who were bent on achieving a similar reputation. It

must be a difficult ambition to-day, but it does not seem to be despaired of, either between book-covers or on the stage.

How far shall we go? Or perhaps—at the risk of being unpopular with those who like to consider themselves original pioneers—I ought to ask, How far shall we go back? For if it be true—in spite of my plea to the contrary—that the Twentieth Century would have shocked the Nineteenth, and the Neo-Georgians the Victorians, of a certainty it is not true that the Twentieth would have shocked the Eighteenth, or the Neo-Georgians the age which is called Georgian without a prefix. Shall we surpass Wycherley, and will Mr. Q—Y—(I hope to goodness that there lives no daring genius who owns those initials!) dare to print words with which Smollett would have blushed to soil his page? Will the circle return upon itself? I remember that once, in a country house where I was staying, somebody unearthed a privately printed volume of family reminiscences. The text contained a veiled and coy suggestion to the detriment of the reputation of a bygone Lady Araminta (or Lady Whatever-you-please). A faded manuscript note was added—by a later member or acquaintance of the family, it must be supposed—to the downright effect that “After several amours in her own rank of life, she ultimately disgraced

herself with the parson." That sounds a modern enough plot for anybody.

And, if we were to extend our survey of the ages, going back beyond "The Girl of the Period" and beyond Lady Araminta, perhaps the conclusion might emerge that the habits women wear change more than the habits they indulge in, that it is not safe (let alone charitable) to infer a scarcity of morals from a skimpiness of skirt, and that Delilah can shear Samson just as effectively when her own locks are long as when she sports an Eton crop.

However these things may be, what has beyond question changed very much is the aspect of West End streets. Motor-cars may have, at all events to a well-informed eye, the beauty of effectiveness, but they do not create the effect of beauty, and, considered as a spectacle, the most luxurious monster among them cannot hold a candle to a barouche hung on Cee springs with a pair of high-steppers whose coats vie in shininess with the paint on the carriage. On an afternoon's walk you may meet one of these perhaps—a refreshing survival—but it is odds that you will not see more, unless there be some Royal procession or function in progress. My loyalty to the Crown gains an added fervour whenever such an occasion causes Royal carriages, and aristocratic carriages, and plutocratic carriages to

emerge from their hiding-places and take the road in handsome numbers again. At other times, Hyde Park on a summer afternoon has lost its glory, and a hurried and impeded glimpse of some beauty mewed up in a motor-car is no good recompense for missing the full glory of Her Grace or Her Ladyship loftily surveying, from the heights of her open barouche, a world which she obviously owned; who would contest her title to it when she contributed so much to its amenity?

And as to the paths and the pavements—well, it may be admitted that the women still do their best with the scanty material that fashion places at their disposal, but the men have practically given up the game. The young ones may be smart, but it is not in the grand manner; a taint of mere convenience and utilitarianism hangs about their attire, however bright it be. Where are the heavy swells? Where are the frock coats? You meet one where you used to meet a hundred. Where are the white duck trousers which—on the person, for example, of the late Mr. Gibson Bowles—used to be harbingers of the spring?

And the London Sunday? Save for enthusiastic amateurs of tentative dramatic productions, it has ceased to exist—or has become a byword of scorn. It is no longer the thing to be in town on Sundays. But of yore it was the great social day for men who had to

be at work all the week. We young men used to go calling—in gratitude for dinners received and in a lively hope of more dinners to come. I suppose that nowadays a young man of socially earnest disposition—on his promotion—might spend a score of Sundays in town without picking up a single eligible invitation.

Well, we must move with the times; we must be efficient; we must make all the money that we can, in order that we may spend it as lavishly as we can; and the people whom we must most admire are our millionaires (or America's, since America's are much bigger millionaires than ours are). So even old Londoners must acquiesce with a sigh in the transmogrification of Regent Street—into something that makes a much better use of the site; just as a much better use is being made of St. James's Square by “parking” motor-cars in it. But what are we old Londoners—even those of us who were not privileged habitually to tread their spacious floors—to say to the fate of the great and historic houses? Devonshire House is gone; a mammoth of commercial enterprise makes the best use of its site. The best use is to be made of the site of Grosvenor House, and, it is reported, of the site of Dorchester House too. And Stafford House is a Museum—naked and unashamed.

But when there is no use in saying anything, a wise

man says nothing; little Jeremiads over vanished and vanishing things are a surer sign of age than of wisdom. New things must come, and, as Bacon says, "A foward retention of Custom is as turbulent a thing as Innovation." And, as John Locke says, "The imputation of novelty is a terrible charge amongst those who judge of men's heads, as they do of their perukes, by the fashion, and can allow none to be right but the received doctrines. But truth, like gold, is not the less so for being newly brought out of the mine."

I had a suspicion that a rather strong whiff of fogeydom had penetrated into my last two or three pages; and I insert—and humbly endorse—these two quotations from great men in order to show that, despite minor lapses (for instance, over barouches and motor-cars), my progressive faith is still strong in me, and that I try to keep the windows of the mind wide open. "God has said [Abelard speaks, long before Bacon and long before Locke] 'I am Truth.' He has never said 'I am what you have been accustomed to believe'." As with Truth, so it should be with Beauty. We must ever be ready to receive her, however changed her habitations, her garments, or her very face. The beauty of London may be transformed but will not die.

## XII

### SPEAKERS, TALKERS, AND CONVERSATION

**I**F WE had an Aristotle amongst us—or even if we still had Aristotle's faithful disciple A. B. Walkley, whose loss every lover of good wit and good English so deeply deplores—we might hope for an analytical discussion of the various forms which human utterance may take; in the course of which enquiry it would be necessary to ask what differentiates good private talk from good public speeches. And the investigator might also be led to recognise that, in between these two very different things there lies a hybrid, having some of the qualities of both yet distinct from either, and with specific qualities of its own—what we call after-dinner speaking; a thing which is the subject of constant malediction but continues to flourish mightily all the same.

Of course there are speeches made after dinner which are not after-dinner speeches; as when a statesman vindicates his policy or a Minister makes an earth-shaking “pronouncement”; such things may be post-prandial according to the letter, but are not so in the

spirit. A true after-dinner speech should have nothing important in it, nothing weighty; a touch of sentiment is, on occasion, allowable, but emotion should be hinted, not stressed; and it is no reproach that, provided you have enjoyed it the night before, you don't remember a word of it in the morning; champagne is good—and so was manna, no doubt—but neither so good on the morrow. Anecdotes are a good seasoning, but should not compose the whole dish, and they should seem not to be dragged in of set purpose—just because they are themselves amusing—but to arise out of the strain of thought appropriate to the occasion; as well as amusing they should be illustrative.

If this theorising about a difficult minor art be at all sound, it seems clear that after-dinner speaking inclines more to the character of talk than to that of oratory. But it is one-sided talk; you have to imagine the mental interjections of your audience. Hence the value of constant variety, of an apparent (at all events an apparent) spontaneity, of quick turns, and of a quality of unexpectedness.

A good and unexpected opening—not “The task that the Chairman has assigned to me to-night,”—or “Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking” (unless, indeed, you can put it into brilliant dog-Latin as Lord Dufferin did on one famous occasion when he found

himself in a company which spoke no known language of later date; *Inusitatus ut sum publice loquendo, non possum non dicere quantum gratificatus et flattificatus sum*—Alas, I forget the rest of it!) sets the speaker on good terms with the listeners at once. One of Mark Twain's is famous. Do not forget the slow drawl in which it seemed to be dragged out of inner and sad reflections. “Homer is dead—Shakespeare is dead—and I myself am feeling far from well.” Beside it I would put an opening of Mr. Birrell's, when he was Chief Secretary for Ireland and daily exposed to relentless heckling by Irish Members in the House: “In proposing this toast, I ask myself the question—(a slight and reflective pause)—though why a man who is Irish Secretary should *ask himself* questions”—*Caetera desunt*—lost in laughter. Mr. Birrell still holds his place as a king among after-dinner speakers, when he can be persuaded to occupy his throne, and it would be pedantry to leave out his name in a retrospect of some forty years of after-dinner speeches just because we look forward to hearing him many times again. By his side, among veteran masters, stands Lord Rosebery—with his brilliant sentences following quick one upon another, and his grave face, the solitary face unmoved amidst the smiles and laughter that hailed every flick of his wit. And I cannot refrain from one incursion

into a later school—just to recall Lord Birkenhead's easy accomplishment, his gay response to the mood of the hour, and a spontaneity that seems perfect—and possibly in his case really is. Most of us have to polish our diamonds in private before we exhibit them to the public gaze.

If we were to amuse ourselves, after the manner of the gentlemen who write about games and sports in the newspapers, by constructing from men of the recent past and of the present an imaginary team—an Eleven or an Eight—of after-dinner speakers, to go to America, say, and undertake the doughty task of tackling that nation of orators, the men I have just mentioned would have to play as amateurs; their main business as speakers lies elsewhere and in more serious fields. And Mr. Kipling and Sir James Barrie, admirable performers as they are when they do consent to "don their flannels," make so few appearances even at home that they would probably "find themselves unable to undertake the journey." But in past years—and these pages, subject to occasional and irresistible trespassings on the present day, are concerned with the past—there were men whose social fame in London rested primarily on their after-dinner value. This is said, of course, without prejudice to their other gifts and achievements, whether as writers or in other lines of activity. One

such, whose very name is, I suppose, lost save to elderly memories, was L. F. Austin. He was unsurpassed in the intimate and personal vein. Put him up to propose "The Guests"—a most difficult toast to make both polite and amusing—and he would touch off each man to a nicety; his shaft might penetrate a joint in his subject's armour, but lightly and without inflicting a wound; indeed he was forced to join in the pleased chuckles of the whole table. Austin would have been an indispensable member of our imaginary team.

Another would have been Joe Comyns Carr. It is true that occasionally, led on by some cause or some enthusiasm, he deviated into seriousness—rather to the regret of his audience, who felt that, while enthusiasts are many, wits are very few—but his true and favourite vein was one of paradox, of mock aggression and playful attack. He could inflict a real sting too, if any previous speaker chanced to tread on his political, literary, or artistic toes; woe betide the wight who dropped a remark in derogation of Dickens! But a neat and effective scarification is not disagreeable to our imperfect natures; the victim might not like it, but the rest of us did.

Had "Joe" Carr chanced to find a Boswell—surely the supremest bit of luck (unless the case of Socrates and Plato be a fair parallel) that ever has, or could have,

befallen anybody with the foible of desiring an earthly immortality, of which he is to be, in all likelihood, himself entirely unconscious or, purged of mortal vanity, disdainful—his fame would be more enduring than any well can be that is based only on memories of men who themselves will soon die and whose written words will soon be forgotten. For he was a great talker, and under an enlightened Government would have been bribed by a large annual salary to let his other talents—as a writer and as a critic—lie idle, and just to talk. Like Dr. Johnson, he talked for victory. A conversation was to him a joyous contest, for which he was always ready.

Not all eminent men are good talkers; they sometimes lack lightness in conversation. But there is almost always a certain suggestion of mental riches in what they say; they seem to be drawing on greater resources of thought than most of us have at command. Lord Morley of Blackburn, in private if not perhaps always in public, combined the richness that comes from much knowledge, observation, and reading with a lightness of touch and a conciseness that made his conversation not only a thing from which you could learn, but also one in which you could delight. I only wish that I had enjoyed more than rare opportunities of hearing it; for, if he made you feel very ignorant, he made the process of learning from him a pure joy. Much of the same

praise must be accorded to that enviable and many-sided man, George Wyndham; but perhaps there must be a reservation as to the conciseness. He tended to expatiate, and was rather ornate and oratorical; but the ornament and oratory were so good as to disarm criticism on that score.

Then there were the men with great wealth of reminiscence and anecdote at their command; very enviable are these too, especially to people who cannot for the life of them remember anecdotes. (Alas, I am one, as the poverty of these pages in that line painfully witnesses!) I remember listening, through the whole of a Sunday morning in a country garden, to Sir William Harcourt, as he poured out the treasures of his memory to a famous lady, who, capping his stories, spurred him to new efforts. And I had a similar experience of the late Lord Morris. Directly after breakfast he propped himself up against the billiard table and began. I was under promise to go for a walk, and about eleven left him in full swing. When I came back he was in the same place and in full swing still, so I resumed my listening; and the fact that most of his stories were garnished with disparaging comments on all that I held dear politically did not interfere with my pleasure in the least. For an Irish anecdote, told in an Irish brogue, is unbeatable in humour, though in sharpness of wit it

may have to give place to a really good French one. The Frenchman relies mainly on the turn of the words, the Irishman on the drollery of the situation. Lord Morris told us that he once found himself being rowed across a loch, his only companion in the little boat being the boatman, whose face was vaguely familiar to him. In reply to a question whether they had ever met, the man replied: "Your honour sentenced me to be hanged, if that's a meeting." And the Chief Justice and the murderer—after a spirited little discussion as to the justice of the sentence and the merits of the reprieve—made friends over the demerits of "that ould thafe Gladstone."

We have masters of anecdote amongst us still—though to my loss I am less in the way of hearing the political or quasi-political variety. Mr. Pett Ridge is an unrivalled and inexhaustible store of the humours of Cockneydom; and Mr. Seymour Hicks's reminiscences—slightly tinged, perhaps, by the glow of imagination and rounded by an artist's hand—of theatrical and club life are in their own vein supreme. And our after-dinner speakers have been, of recent years, reinforced and variegated by the advent of women in that new capacity—among so many other new and more important capacities. Women speakers do not indeed add much in the way of anecdotes; when one comes to

think of it, it is, for some reason or other, a rare thing to hear a woman tell an anecdote; but they bring their own qualities into service. Being fundamentally serious, as they prove by the earnestness which they devote to unimportant matters—nothing is a trifle to a true woman—they took to political speaking sooner and more readily than to the lighter kind, and in my earlier days seemed inclined to overrate the solemnity of occasions which in their true nature were not at all solemn. They were apt to strike the note of emotion too soon—it should come, if at all, at the end, not at the beginning of the speech—and too often; they had not learnt that emotion must be deftly and lightly introduced into an atmosphere of wine and cigars. Things are different now; the lesson has been learnt. To cite only one name—and I cite it with the more pleasure because it affords an opportunity to pay homage to a great artist in another sphere—few male speakers of to-day could afford to “give points” to Dame Madge Kendal over a dinner table; just as few male novelists could give away a start—or “sex allowance”—to “Elizabeth”—of the German Garden, and of so many other deftly fashioned, witty, and delicately malicious inventions.

Theoretically, I suppose, no discussion of talkers and speakers could be complete if it did not include a

section on bores. But the subject is, from more than one point of view, too dangerous. In his most amusing book, *Reminiscences of Oxford* (dating from the eighteen-thirties onwards), Tuckwell tells a story of two old dons, Frowd and Mo Griffiths by name. They were walking together round Christ Church Meadow, and “little Frowd was overheard lamenting that the strange originals of their younger days seemed to have vanished from the skirts of Oxford knowledge; but was consoled by Griffiths—“Does it not occur to you, Dr. Frowd, that you and I are the ‘characters’ of to-day?” The bearing of this story on the subject of bores is obvious, and indeed it is probable—if we candidly consider the matter—that everybody is or has been in the course of his life a bore to somebody else—either by imparting undesired information, or by describing at too great length his views or his diseases, or by a natural talent for being and remaining present just when his absence is most ardently desired. The subject is too dangerous—*Mutato nomine de te Fabula narratur*—Others may see us as we do not see ourselves. I believe that a certain member of one of my clubs was in the habit of referring to me as “that poisonous fellow”—a view of myself which I cannot fall in with wholeheartedly. Tuckwell himself deserves a place in any gallery of speakers. A Fellow of New College and a fine classical scholar, a

clergyman, a noted horticulturist, a man of suave and gentle manner and mellow humour, he was also an ardent Radical "Agitator"—(Why do Radicals—or why did Radicals—always "agitate," whereas Conservatives confine themselves to "arousing national feeling"? ) and one of the best men on a political platform that I have ever heard. He was very amusing there, as well as in print—and very cunning. He once spoke to me, when I was a candidate, at a meeting where the audience consisted mainly of rather hot and what would be called to-day "class-conscious" artisans. He began: "As I travelled here to-day in a first-class carriage —" A slight chill made itself felt among his audience. In a moment he retrieved—and much more than retrieved—this calculated *faux pas* by adding: "I like to find out sometimes what is being said amongst the uneducated classes." Of course a good story followed to show the hide-bound stupidity of the upper ranges of society. He was a great speaker, with ridicule and apt anecdote as his chief weapons. I was rather oddly reminded of him, when, later on, I heard, in New York, the famous "atheist" Bob Ingersoll, who in his friendly and colloquial fashion smiled away the convictions of the "Fundamentalists" of that generation.

When Lord Melbourne resigned, and it was a question of the incoming Tory Ministers gaining the

good graces of a youthful Queen, the Duke of Wellington (as a well-worn anecdote relates) asked, "Damn it, how can we? I have no small talk, and Peel has no manners!" Probably the deficiency which he lamented did not much matter in the case of the Great Duke; as recorded, he had a crispness of phrase which went far to make up for it; but he was right in the importance he attached to the gift which he lacked. Small talk begets no famous witticisms and finds no place in memoirs or tradition; hence the masters of it do not gain the credit which they deserve. The society of their own day is infinitely indebted to them. How they oil the wheels, and set strangers at their ease with one another! Among such "lively rattles"—such "little masters" of conversation—Hubert Henry Davis, author of *deft* and witty comedies which it would be a pity to let die, stands very high. His ease, lightness, and unfailing resource could bridge the awkward silences of any company. And my affection, no less than his merits, calls to me to add the name of my old friend Philip Burne-Jones, who would set about to break down the stiffness of a stiff party as though he had been paid to do it. He excelled at mixed parties of children, half-growns, and (shall we say?) over-growns—a very difficult form of entertainment—and would have everybody first listening to him and then romping

with him in a quarter of an hour. I am not sure that Phil gained a balance of pleasure out of life for himself, but I am amply sure of the pleasure he gave to others.

In order to win honours in the conversational class-list, a man should earnestly strive to be a good listener as well as a good talker—a grateful recipient as well as a ready donor. One gifted with a wide range of genuine interests and sympathies starts, of course, with an immense advantage here; he can get into the skin of his companion just as a good novelist gets into the skin of his characters, and shares the thoughts and emotions appropriate to them; the range of his powers being proved by the variety of human beings (sometimes even of infra-human beings, as in the case of *The Jungle Book*) with whom he can effect the mystical union, which must preserve the qualities both of the creative writer and of the imagined creature; for if he fails to express, and to impress, his own qualities he lacks individuality, and if he fails in the other respect he lacks verisimilitude. But, short of this natural gift of wide sympathies, much can be done in conversation by a calculated adaptability. If your companion proves to be barren on your chosen subjects, encourage him to discourse on his own; many people can be interesting when talking their own "shop," while being entirely unfruitful on any other topic. For instance, if your

preoccupation happens to be psychology, and your friend's happens to be horse-racing, let the conversation be of the Turf and not of the intricacies of the human mind—or complexes. Your unselfishness will very likely be rewarded; for, when you have had all that you can stand of the pedigrees and achievements of noble animals, you may, by dexterous prompting, and—without seeking to change the subject—by a slight shifting of the point of view, find yourself hearing entertaining "yarns" about noble owners, about jockeys, even about swindles, which may, at all events for one evening, stay the cravings of psychological appetite. And your friend will go home (shall we add "at last"?) thinking you a very agreeable fellow.

I have represented both the parties to this conversation as being men. Perhaps I ought to have made one of them a woman; and there can be no doubt as to which. For it is by this amiable, yet not wholly disinterested, adaptability that woman is supposed to gain her hold over man and get her way with him. But how is a man really to know the truth about that? The net is not spread in the sight of the bird. And the bird, liméd and not even struggling to be free, goes home, murmuring, "What a charming sympathetic woman she is!"

Since the preceding paragraph may seem to exaggerate the amiability, or to impugn the sincerity

(a humble attempt at a Gibbonian antithesis!), of women as a sex, I will cite a witness—a woman, who appears, by her careful use of epicene terms, to draw no distinction between the sexes: "When people wish to attach, they should always be ignorant. To come with a well-informed mind is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others which a sensible person would always wish to avoid."

A little hard on both of us, Madame? But it is Jane Austen who speaks.

## XIII

### AMERICAN INTERLUDES

#### (i) ON THE ROAD

I AM well aware—thanks to assurances constantly received from American friends—that nobody knows anything of modern scenes and conditions in the United States who left those shores less recently than, say, last Tuesday week. So quickly do things change in the Great Republic! Since I have not been there for more than twenty years, any remarks or reflections that I may indulge in must be regarded as having a purely historical—or even archæological—character. The present tense, if it ever creeps in, represents the permanence of an impression, not of the facts that caused it.

Like so many English writers, I received—it was in 1897—an invitation to go on a reading and lecturing tour in the United States, and, led by curiosity and the hope of gain, accepted it. Consequently I landed at New York on October 16th and “opened” at Lowell, Massachusetts, on Monday the 18th. Between that date and January 14, 1898, I gave above seventy-five

"shows," besides attending a great many receptions and dinners, and covering, geographically, most of the cities of any size between Montreal (for the tour included a week or so in Canada) and Richmond, and between New York and Minneapolis—a very pleasant and interesting, if rather tiring, experience. My manager and almost constant companion in these journeyings was the famous Major Pond.

On that name I must pause for a moment, for he was a remarkable man, and has left behind him a book, entitled *Eccentricities of Genius*, which proves him not only an enthusiast but a shrewd observer of human nature. A tall and heavily built man, with spectacles and a rather straggling beard, he was a hardened traveller, and faced all our journeys with no other equipment than a small valise, or "grip," and a thin overcoat; he would be asleep the moment he stretched himself on those abominable sleeping shelves (they could not be called beds, and could hardly be called bunks—the "drawing-room," which we took when "business" was good, was the only comfortable place) and there he would slumber motionless—though not always noiseless—till the morning. He ate heartily, but was indifferent as to when, where, or what he ate; his one and perpetual luxury was a cigar—at four to a "quarter"—which he smoked at the far end and

chewed at the near till the two processes met in the middle. His instinct was to be always on the move; and he seemed to have been on it always, since he started by running away from home at the age of thirteen. He had served in the Civil War, and was proud of being "Major" and not "Colonel," since the latter rank was conferred somewhat indiscriminately; he had taken part in "rounding up the rebels" in the South in the later stages of the conflict; a pretty ruthless business this seems to have been—of necessity, perhaps—for according to him, unless the women-folk would give up their men-folk who were in hiding, their farmhouses and crops were burnt. The famous "methods of barbarism" controversy which arose when the Boers were being "rounded up" in the final phase of the South African War recalled his stories to my memory.

But, being himself the gentlest and kindest of men, he did not love to dwell on those scenes, and much preferred to talk of his "Stars"; to glance again through his book reminds me of many stories he told of them. The long line of these illustrious persons began pictur-esque, with Ann Eliza Young, Brigham Young's last and nineteenth wife, who was converted to Methodism, toured the country, and agitated Washington with her "revelations" about Mormonism—and it stretched

on through many once popular and some still famous names. But the greatest men were not always the most successful. The Major's book begins its account of Matthew Arnold's tour thus: "Matthew Arnold came to this country and gave one hundred lectures. Nobody ever heard any of them, not even those sitting in the front row." The book does not add—what the Major did add to me—that, after the first of those lectures, he caused a very large poster to be made and affixed to the exterior of the building. It ran: "Arrangements have been made by which Mr. Arnold will be clearly audible in all parts of the Hall." It was before the day of "loud speakers," and I never learnt what these arrangements were; the Major discouraged cross-examination on the point; but I must suppose that if they were not successful, at all events the poster was, as the book goes on to tell that Mr. Arnold returned to England with "a very handsome sum of money."

In fact the Major had his likes and dislikes, and I am afraid Matthew Arnold was not among the former. And he did not like Dr. Talmage, though he greatly admired his talent for "publicity." On the other hand, his hero was Henry Ward Beecher, whose champion he made himself and whose fortunes he followed, through good and evil days, for years. Next to Beecher there stood perhaps Wendell Phillips, with whom he

coupled—though not in so high a rank as an orator—William Lloyd Garrison. The Major's father had kept an “underground station” in Wisconsin, and screened runaway slaves from the United States Marshal “before the War.” No wonder the Major admired the pioneers of Abolition! But everybody in America was not of the same opinion. Fresh from the Major and (as it chanced) fresh from Boston, I was talking to my friend John Fox, the well-known Southern novelist. We had got on to the Negro Question—or Problem—and I was rather startled when Fox began a remark with the words, “There was once a low-living Yankee printer named Garrison——” “Yes,” said I, “I have heard of him.”

I must—very reluctantly—tear myself away from the Major's rich table of memories and come back to my own more meagre fare. But I cannot leave him without a tribute of affectionate remembrance—which he deserves far more than I deserve what he has said of me in his book; wherein, however, there is not lacking, here and there, a touch of his candour and shrewdness—a hit at my humours and tempers that makes me smile.

When an untravelled man first sights the High Alps or first walks the streets of Rome, his mind is indeed staggered, but it is not altogether unprepared.

The great impression has been led up to by a series of lesser ones which began the moment he set foot on foreign soil; he has become accustomed to the unaccustomed and taught to expect the unexpected. But if he were soundly drugged in his native London or Manchester, and allowed to hear no foreign sound and see no foreign sight until he awoke at the foot of Mont Blanc or on the steps of the Capitol, he would receive not perhaps a greater impression but a greater suddenness of impression. This suddenness was to me the peculiar property of the impression made on me by New York arising out of the emptiness of the ocean—for how empty, in spite of the “stream of traffic,” the Atlantic seems! A new world springs to view—out of nothing! I confess that during my first visit I never got rid of a sense of unreality—a wonder that Americans were not surprised at the existence, to say nothing of the immensity, of their own country—and this although I had already met, and was indeed familiar friends with, not a few of them. And this feeling of a newcomer from the Old Country was kept alive in him, as he came to explore this new world, by the constant shocks of finding likenesses to what he had left behind in the middle of unlikenesses, and differences suddenly emerging out of scenes or surroundings that had seemed like home. I had never been out of Europe; and the

Continent of Europe is consistently unlike England. America was capricious—so like one moment, so unlike the next. Perhaps it is the same with Australia or New Zealand—I have, alas, never seen them. Thus, so far as I was concerned, the characteristic was new and unique.

If America had been then what it is now, the sense of unlikeness must have triumphed with the traveller from England of the 'Nineties. But at this date there was still a homelike backwardness in some things. There were horse-drawn trams in some New York streets, a horse bus plied on Fifth Avenue. Motor-cars were a rarity. What Detroit—Detroit itself!—was proud of was its system of tramways; in justifiable pride and kind hospitality I was driven all over it. There were no buildings more than about thirty storeys high—a bagatelle (at which, none the less, I wondered). It was still considered remarkable that one could telephone from New York to Chicago. And there were no cinemas. Perhaps a young American who visits us to-day will conclude that his own country in the 'Nineties was not so very much in advance of the England of to-day.

There were one or two minor differences of custom, which struck the English visitor; whether they persist to-day I know not. You could not buy a newspaper

at its advertised price; it was very difficult to do it in the case of a ticket for the theatre; a small boy—either whistling or chewing gum—flung at you, on the railroad cars, what he judged—from your appearance, I suppose—would be to your taste in light literature; and you could not have your boots blacked unless your feet were inside them—this last a rule whose rationale I have never been able to fathom; to black boots may be, *per se*, a servile occupation (that is conceded only for the sake of argument), but why less so when the owner of the boots is in occupation and more so when he is still lingering in his slippers?

During this visit I stayed in New York—giving readings in and about the city—for a week or so. For the rest we were travelling, and, like other companies “on the road,” we had our ups and downs. When we had a fixed fee, all was well; when we “speculated” by taking a hall or theatre on our own account, things did not always turn out so well. In the smaller cities much depended on the competition—the rival attraction which we found ourselves “up against.” I have told how Joe Jefferson spoilt my audience but consoled me with supper. I had no such consolation out of four certainly attractive young ladies (at least they looked very attractive on their posters) who dogged my steps through several cities. They were

a dancing "Quartette," and were formidable rivals. Probably they gave a more lively entertainment than I did. I think that they came from Nebraska, and I was guilty of wishing that they would go back there. Once or twice I found myself in damaging competition with myself—or at least with the popular actors who were performing plays for which I was wholly or partly responsible. It was flattering to think that female hearts had been torn between seeing Rudolf Rassendyll and seeing the man who made him; but I am bound to admit that Rudolf always had the best of it. Still, though we did not grow exactly rich, we had nothing to complain of from the business point of view; and I saw many cities and many institutions; and many distinguished men made me welcome. If I mention some of them it is less to vaunt myself than in praise of American courtesy, and in the indulgence of a grateful memory.

I must begin here—though I did not chronologically begin there—with the President himself. After I had seen the Capitol and the wonderful Library—under the guidance of the Librarian of Congress, Mr. John Russell Young—I was driven to the White House, and Mr. McKinley gave me an audience, a very gracious act on his part towards a young English writer still on his promotion (though he has not, in fact, been much

promoted since those days—rather the contrary indeed!). Mr. McKinley is not, I believe, regarded now as one of America's great Presidents, but he filled his high place with ample dignity. A man of imposing stature and appearance, he had easy manners and a ready flow of talk—luckily, for I was flustered and rather tongue-tied—and took pains to give me the impression that he was well acquainted with my works and that his time was freely at my disposal. He seemed, in fact, very accessible, for people were coming into the big room, where he sat at a big table, all the time—just dropping in and, seeing, I suppose, that the President was engaged, dropping out again quite casually. (There was more ceremony, as I found afterwards, in gaining access to Mr. Carnegie's presence at his house in New York.) And at the end of my audience—signified by a friendly "And now you'd like to have a look at the house, I daresay, Mr. Hawkins,"—he handed me over to one of his secretaries, telling him to show me anything I wanted to see. I wanted to see all of that historic house—just such a spacious, dignified, and yet simple dwelling as an English aristocrat was wont to build for himself a hundred and fifty years ago—but I restricted myself to the reception rooms—large well-proportioned rooms, furnished rather in what is called the mid-

Victorian style. But the atmosphere of history—the thought of the men who had lived and of the things that had been done there—gave to the house a magic to which I willingly surrendered. No wonder that some Presidents succumb to a foward inclination towards a “third term”! Let alone anything else, to leave the White House must be a pang indeed.

I had met the President that was; the same evening I met a President that was to be. It was at the house of “Tom Page”—Thomas Nelson Page, the distinguished novelist, afterwards American Ambassador to Italy (America makes mere authors ambassadors, a thing not done here—Lord Bryce was an author, but not merely an author). There were men present distinguished in politics and in literature—of my own craft, besides the host, James Lane Allen and that John Fox who was responsible for the regrettable description of Garrison already recorded; but the most regarded man was the Assistant Secretary of the Navy. It was, in fact, by a tragic accident of fate, and (so it is said) by a sorry miscalculation of his enemies, that Theodore Roosevelt became President of the United States. The odd thing was that somehow everybody seemed, that evening, to know that somehow and at some time he would be. He was the man whom I, the stranger, was bidden to look at. So does the force of personality

make itself felt. An assured, not disagreeable, and yet slightly aggressive self-confidence marked his bearing, or emanated from him as he entered. I have not words skilful enough, I fear, to prevent this impression from sounding a little unpleasant. In fact it was not the least so. It was only the involuntary expression of the strength of the man. If I might cite a parallel among English statesmen of recent years—I will not cite a name from among living ones, though I feel as if I could—it would be Mr. Joseph Chamberlain; on the merest and most uncontroversial encounter he gave the same sense of latent potential force—and dangerousness. *Cet animal est méchant: quand on l'attaque, il se défend.* It was written all over Roosevelt at all events, though it was not in the least inconsistent with good-humour—any more than it was in the distinguished parallel which I have made bold to suggest.

To a President that was and a President that was to be I added one that had been—ex-President Harrison—not (as it struck me) a man of Roosevelt's force or even of McKinley's adroitness, rather a "favourite son" of his own state than a national figure. To my great chagrin I missed Cleveland. The Major promised him to me—at a football match at Princeton; but the great man did not appear. I was aggrieved; for in the matter of producing "celebrities" and "lovely girls"

the Major was generally as good as his word—with the qualification that the epithet “lovely” did not on his lips mean exactly what it would have meant on mine. But a sweetness of disposition and manner is, of course, more important than any curl of a short upper lip or any devil in dancing eyes. The Major’s use of the word was right—though occasionally misleading.

If I had come but three or four years earlier, I might have hoped to be presented to Oliver Wendell Holmes. I was too late for that; but I did meet Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a survivor of the “Golden Age” of Boston and Cambridge society. He has been called “the typical American.” No single type can cover the infinite variety of the United States, and perhaps “the typical New Englander” would be a better description; for alike in the aristocratic handsomeness of his person, in his manner, and in his mind he seemed to convey the tradition and refinement of historic New England—steeped in European culture, friendly to the Old Country, yet most proudly and ardently patriotic, and possessed of an intellectual quality not borrowed but of native growth and native flavour.

At Boston I met also Edward Everett Hale, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and Justice Holmes, son of “The Autocrat,” who satisfied my lawyer-like curiosity by showing me over the Courts. At Indianapolis I struck

up a lively but, alas, brief friendship with James Whitcomb Riley, who has embalmed the "Hoosier" dialect in his poetry, and was a man of quiet and rich humour.

And orators—after-dinner orators! A multitude! In every great city there seemed to be dozens, any one of whom would have made a special name for himself over here. They none of them appeared to need warning or preparation; at the call of the moment they could reel off good stories—and apparently, to judge by the surprised bursts of laughter which broke from the audiences, new stories. Where do they find them or how do they invent them? If I could have remembered one in fifty of them, and brought them home with me, my fortune as a speaker would have been made. Chauncey Depew was the acknowledged king of this art, but many and many were not far behind him.

Alas, I was always in a hurry—always travelling onwards! New cities, new men, new impressions so crowded on one another that no memory could hold them all. In the great cities I might stay two or three days, but in most it was for me what in theatrical parlance is styled a "one night stand." Sometimes I hardly knew, literally, where I was; arriving in the dark at seven in the evening, driving to an hotel and getting into evening clothes, on the platform at eight,

on to a party or back to the hotel—and a train to catch at anywhere from eleven at night to three in the morning, bound for the next engagement—sometimes a matinée—eight or ten hours away! Small wonder that much of it is lost to memory. I may pride myself on remembering Niagara, but of a week or so (in all I paid two visits) in Canada, I blush to say that only one day stands out. Nobody—not even I myself who forget most things—would forget Montreal. And Chicago—save for meeting there for the first time some friends whom I have never lost—is just a whirl. Altogether too big a thing so take in within the space of seventy-two congested hours—for my work, for the city, the University, lunches, dinners, and receptions—but not the stock-yards; I drew the line short of that.

Among the pleasantest engagements which came my way were my visits to Universities. I saw—though again for only a few fleeting hours—eight or ten of them, including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Cornell. These were splendid places, not only in their material equipment of halls, laboratories, libraries, and clubs, but in the impression of efficiency and concentration that they gave. They seemed to have added—I must renew the reminder that I am writing of thirty years ago—a strong element of German thoroughness to what they owed to English inspiration; and this im-

pression was, I think, reinforced for a visitor who was an English University man by the fact that each had an external and internal unity that does not exist for the eye, and does not exist so completely for the mind, in the case of Oxford or Cambridge, where for the visitor the oneness of the University is apt to be lost in the multiplicity of the colleges, while the largely autonomous government of each college and the diversities of atmosphere which pervade them do, in fact, tend to screen, if not to diminish, the unity and authority of the University itself. I am not discussing merits, but only recalling a difference in the impression given. Harvard or Yale is just Harvard or Yale to the visitor, though no doubt the institutions of clubs, and societies, and the stricter social division of the men into their respective "years" (which obtained then—I do not know how far it does still) give an internal diversity which a rapid glance cannot appreciate. None the less, the impression remains—as though Harvard or Yale were one great ship, Oxford or Cambridge a squadron of small units, though under the same supreme command.

This note of unity and concentration was struck even on so light an occasion (I hope that the epithet as applied to such an event is not blasphemous) as an inter-University football match. I saw one at Princeton.

Princeton sat, all together, on one side of the ground, with the enemy on the other side. Princeton incited or applauded their champions not with scattered and sudden shouts—disorderly offsprings of individual emotion—but as one man with one “yell,” the sanctified College “yell”—given by all at the same moment, in obedience to a wand waved by the bandmaster (it seems the nearest name for him), who stood with his back to the game and his face to his orchestra, and wielded his long baton without much apparent reference to the immediate fortunes of the fray but in fierce response to the vocal demonstrations of the foe massed on the other side of the battlefield.

Battlefield seems the right word for the scene of such a football match—thirty years ago at all events. I was aware that the defensive armour worn by the combatants was as much, or more, dictated by the hardness of the frost-bound earth as by any fear of the enemy’s attack, but it had a grim appearance; and a row of substitutes sat in readiness to take the place of any comrade killed or wounded in the battle (Nobody was killed—I don’t think it actually happened often). Though an old Rugby player, I understood little of the tactics, and the orders shouted by the captain were veiled in a cipher code that I—and the enemy, as I presume—could not understand. But I have a terrific

vision of a flying wedge of brawny men charging down the field, overwhelming or brushing aside all who tried to impede it. Glad was I that I was not playing three-quarters and having to stop that rush!

One more picture—to illustrate a more than English zest and thoroughness in sport. At one University—I forget which—I was escorted into an underground apartment. A burly "coach" was shouting fierce instructions to a man who was sculling in a boat. The sculler sculled vigorously, but the boat did not move. It was fixed in a frame. And there was no water; the sculls dipped into empty air. You see, the river was frozen, and this was the only way to practise. But as a sport, as an amusement——! Lucky for our youth, I thought, that the Isis and the Cam are not much given to freezing! Indeed I fear that no such cellars would be built under Christ Church, and that Oxonians would submit tamely to the decrees of Nature and decline to row without water. Americans look at things differently.

## XIV

### AMERICAN INTERLUDES

#### (ii) AT LEISURE

A FEW years later, in the early part of 1903, it occurred to me that I should like to see a little more of America, and to see it a little more at leisure and from a different angle. Instead of travelling strenuously all over the place and leading the arduous life of a public entertainer, I proposed to myself to settle down in New York for a few weeks—with just two or three excursions thrown in, perhaps—and see as much of its social life as I could. I relied confidently—and justly—on the kindness of my American friends to help me in this enterprise of turning myself for the time into a New Yorker, of treating New York as though it were London, and I were a gentleman of leisure taking a holiday there.

It seemed a pleasant programme, and it was carried through under even pleasanter conditions than I had ventured to anticipate; for when I landed from the old *Campania*—after a very rough voyage—my friend Robert Howard Russell (I must mention his name in

gratitude), well known as a publisher of beautiful books, would not hear of my going to the Holland House as I had arranged to do, and installed me as his partner in his flat in Fifth Avenue, just by Sherry's and almost opposite what was then "the new Delmonico's." The tide that has since flowed so far was already moving "uptown," but we were not yet left stranded. We were still quite enough in the centre of things, and, besides being entertained with boundless hospitality, I was most favourably placed for conducting my little campaign of enjoyment and observation—within much the same limits as my enjoyment and observation of London itself has ever gone, limits to which I have confessed on an earlier page of these notes.

Voyagers to and from New York to-day tell me that the great city is too much of a "rush" and social life too "hectic" save for young and very ardent devotees of gaiety. I do not think that social New York of a quarter of a century ago (or within a year of it) was open to that charge. It seemed to me—a social butterfly for the nonce, though already a slightly middle-aged one—just about right; gay, animated, and luxurious, but not feverish nor of an overdone sumptuousness. I had some means of judging since, besides the life of restaurants and theatres, free to anyone who has

money in his pocket, my host and other friends opened to me circles and houses to which I should not myself have been able to find the key. How far I judged correctly—through my London eyes—is, of course, another question.

New York society of that day was certainly not more democratic or equalitarian than London society of the same date. In fact it seemed to me to be the other way. Different classes—or, in deference to democracy, let us say different sets—mixed less. Society folk of acknowledged eminence, especially those who bore names traditionally distinguished, kept themselves more apart and lived more exclusively within their own circle. The “society man” was more of a separate species. It was not, of course, by any means an unknown thing, but it was a rarer thing to find artists, musicians, or literary folk frequenting select parties and great houses. The social career did not seem so freely “open to the talents” as in London, nor hostesses to spread their nets so wide. Hence to pass the barrier between one set and another was in a sense, not too serious a sense, more of an achievement—a thing emphasised by the greater publicity given to the doings and the personnel of the more exclusive sets. In this last respect London has, since that date, “crept up” a good deal.

To pursue the comparison between the two cities a little further—if it was more difficult for mere brains or mere social gifts to effect the desired *entrée* (and there is nothing of necessity snobbish in desiring it, since it opens new fields of observation to an alert mind) it was more difficult still for mere money—money unassisted by intellect and unadorned by attractiveness; even money, brains, and attractiveness, all three together, might strive in vain if they happened unfortunately to be coupled with origins—regional, racial, or even merely too recent—which did not find favour with the arbiters of fashion. In this matter the lines seemed to be rather rigid, and to result sometimes not merely in the exclusion of delightful people, but in the discouragement of public-spirited men and women, who had done much for the arts or for the benefit of the city and the nation. Yet, just as the best of religions may breed superstition, the soundest of principles may result in prejudice. The stand against the pretensions of “mere money” was sound in itself—especially in a land where there was so much, and where so much was made of it in popular prints and popular ideals. High society’s imperviousness to this pressure may be set to its credit against any possible lack of receptivity in other directions.

Another point of difference struck the explorer of

New York society. Though New York is—and was—one of the greatest cities in the world, it is not a Capital—not even a State Capital, let alone a National one. No Senate or Assembly, no Congress or Chamber of Deputies, sits within its limits. From time to time there were great fights over municipal affairs, though more commonly, I fancy, only grumblings. (That is true of London too, by the way; it seems as if to be really municipally keen and interested a city must not be over large or over heterogeneous.) But national (or Federal) politics were a rare topic of talk, and national politicians or statesmen rare figures compared to what they are in corresponding social circles here at home. In London it is not possible to go about much without meeting a good many members of the Houses of Parliament, busy and entertaining with their political topics and gossip—even secrets, if they are truthful and you are lucky!—so busy perhaps as to be compelled to exercise their singular privilege of coming to dinner in morning clothes and rushing off again before the rest of the men “join the ladies.”

The absence—or at least the relative insignificance—of this element in society—involved to my mind a serious loss. For though politics, like anything else, if over-stressed, can become wearisome, they both provide and broaden conversation, and infuse a mixture

of things that matter into the pleasant wastes of things that don't. It could not be helped; if public men don't work and live in a town, they cannot dine and talk in it. Perhaps New York society would not have helped it if it could, for in those days politics were—like silver in the days of Solomon—not much regarded, at any rate as a career; if you were a politician, you could live it down, but that needed some doing. Perhaps there was some prejudice here, and even a little affectation; but the absence of a political society indicated a solid fact. Great as New York is, it is not and cannot be all that London is to Great Britain. The high office of Capital City of the United States is "in Commission"—like the office of the Lord Treasurer or the Lord High Admiral; each of these offices subsumes the personality of four or five gentlemen. It takes as many great cities to fulfil all the functions and to express all the spirit of an ideal capital of the United States.

If, then, the stranger found less human variety at a big New York party than he had been used to find at a London one, he found at least equal material sumptuousness and elegance, at least equal gaiety and "go"—for Americans are generally very fluent and animated talkers—and, it must be confessed, a higher average of personal appearance, due perhaps to the very fact that the company were not samples of the bulk of the

population but carefully bred or selected specimens. In the case of the women and girls natural advantages were reinforced by all the resources of art; frocks were not only rich but very "smart," and the art of wearing them more generally understood than it was in England; dowdies could not live in that atmosphere. If anybody wishes to realise the outward semblance of these brilliant beings, let him turn back to the types which my friend Charles Dana Gibson, finding inspiration very close to his eyes and hand, was then portraying; for if it was not in nature that all the girls should look like "Gibson girls," they were all trying to, and a surprisingly large number made quite a good shot at it. Happily Dana is still drawing pretty girls—of the present generation; but modern fashions, whatever their other merits may be—and they are considerable—are not so consonant with the stateliness and the delicate stand-offishness that characterised "the Gibson girls" of those days.

As might be expected, the clubs were the "last word" in comfort and luxury, for the American man is not only very sociable but also thoroughly understands the art of making himself comfortable. They are infinitely hospitable to strangers. On my first, and quasi-public, visit (Nothing escapes American reporters, and New York enjoyed at least the oppor-

tunity of learning all about me—down to the very shape of the boots that I wore) I was made a member of, I think, twenty-one; and, on my second and purely private arrival, of seven or eight. I cordially appreciated those generous compliments—even though I could not avail myself of them in all cases. One little difficulty was involved. Contrary to our prevailing custom, you did not pay ready money for refreshments; everything was done by “checks,” and your account rendered at the end of a month or quarterly. Consequently, when the end of my stay came, I had to spend a rather feverish day, going round to all these clubs, not only leaving cards of thanks and farewell (as etiquette properly demanded), but also discovering at which of them I had succeeded in standing myself a lunch or a cocktail. The officials in charge of the finance departments resented this sudden demand to be allowed to pay out of due season, and hardly softened at my plea that I could not decamp in the character of a defaulter. To this day I have an uneasy feeling that I owe one or two New York clubs the price of a long-forgotten cocktail.

Talking of cocktails—the habit had not then made much way in London, and the obligations entailed by it at New York club dinners were rather heavy to an Englishman. Often it was a case not of one before

dinner, but of three or four—hardly to be avoided without an apparent lack of good-fellowship. This preliminary *séance* might last for three-quarters of an hour or so, and generally included pressing offers of a large cigar. I did dodge this last demand on my powers, under the cover of cigarettes; still I went into dinner feeling rather handicapped in my dealings with champagne, port, and liqueurs. I had to watch my steps (I don't wish to be taken in an ultra-literal sense); but the rest of the company seemed quite equal to the ordeal. When Americans say that it is impossible to drink in their climate, they do not do justice to the climate—or to themselves.

It has been—and is—my good fortune to live much among Americans, and I notice that, whenever three or four of them find themselves gathered together in a strange land and seated at an alien table, they will presently begin to talk wistfully of their native food. They are, in the main, justified. They have their limitations in that line. They cannot produce joints of beef and mutton like ours (No more can the French for that matter, though in the old days Durand's, alone out of all Paris, claimed to achieve a sirloin worthy of English mouths), but in the more recondite ranges of cooking they combine all that France has to teach them with delicacies that cannot be had in perfection

anywhere else. The only recognition of his hospitality which I could offer to my host was to force him—when we were both free—to let me be his host at one of the best restaurants; Delmonico's was my favourite. Here, grafted on to the best of French—or one may now say international—cooking, were real Okra soup, terrapin, Virginia or Delaware ducks, cooked, I believe, according to old Negro receipts. If my wistful American friends are recalling meals like these, I join my sighs with theirs; though I may be less sympathetic when they recall such primitive dainties as pork and beans, corn, and pie—which perhaps smack too much of the *prisca virtus* of old-time New England. On them, no doubt, *Fortis Etruria crevit*; I shamelessly confess to a preference for Delmonico's.

They have fogs in New York sometimes—I myself once was two hours making the passage on the ferry from New Jersey—but the natives were extremely reluctant to admit the fact. (They have them in Paris, too, but there also the mode is to regard them as an exclusively British invention.) But a clear bright spring day in New York makes an unbeatable climate—one that, in its mingled freshness and mildness, tempts the feet to gentle but prolonged strolling. I was a man of leisure for most of the day, and my friends mostly had work to do. By myself I used to ramble about

Central Park, and by myself once I walked from there to the Battery, down on one side of the street and up again on the other—a delightful and instructive pilgrimage; for as you came near to the Battery there were old churches and old low houses (lower than the brown-stone houses in what was then but is not now “uptown”)—and the streets had names and not numbers. Who was the highly practical genius who thought of numbering streets instead of naming them? It is a convenient method, and it avoids absurdities in nomenclature, but I think that the balance of the argument is against it, for street names often embalm national or local history and arouse in the mind of the passer-by interesting trains of thought.

I cannot recall these New York strolls of mine without calling up also the memory of my dear friend Richard Harding Davis. He was not a great novelist, either in breadth of scene or in depth of penetration; but both his books of adventure and his stories of New York life—especially the *Van Bibber* series—are written with wonderful vividness and zest; his evident enjoyment in writing them infects the reader; and his keen eye for a scene and scent for an atmosphere enabled him to catch and express by his pen the spirit of the New York of his day much as Dana Gibson was doing by his pencil. And whatever may be, yesterday

or to-day, his rank as a novelist, Dick Davis was unquestionably a great reporter. He could, so to say, impale on the reader's mind the vision of a place or the scenes of a war as a collector of butterflies impales a specimen on his board; and he hunted wars all over the world as other men hunt specimens; he hated to miss one. In his own generation he had, to my thinking, only one rival, G. W. Steevens. I chanced to be lunching with Dick and the late Lord Northcliffe on the day when the news came of Steevens's death at Ladysmith, and I remember the generosity of Dick's tribute to his distinguished confrère and competitor. As a critic of war and in describing operations Steevens was his superior, but Dick drew level by his amazing pictorial power, and by a sympathy and a humour that never let you forget that armies were not merely machines, not merely corps, divisions, or battalions, but also human beings, individuals, each with his qualities, his foibles, and his sufferings. He was a being very human himself—very full of life, courage, and high spirits, always a child (sometimes a petulant one) in some ways—he had, for example, an odd *p penchant* for collecting obscure "Orders" from none too reputable Potentates and Presidents—but always a delightful companion, always appreciating and enjoying, in love with life, with his work, and with his friends.

We did much theatre-going, of course—was I not treating New York as if it were London?—but I will not attempt to chronicle the plays since most of them are, unhappily or happily, dead, and a chronicle of dead plays does not make very lively reading; and I will not appraise the players; most of the leading ones are happily still alive, and have spoken, or can speak, if they are so disposed, for themselves, and besides, are too well known on this side of the Atlantic also to need any tribute from me. But I may permit myself—in a rare indulgence of the critical spirit—to observe that there was already in managerial minds—and perhaps sometimes in the minds of the “Stars” themselves—too much of the idea that one “Star” was enough for one play, and that if one “Name” on the bill would fill a theatre—why have two? This theory has an economic plausibility, but I do not believe in it even from an economic point of view. The value, not merely artistic but commercial, of having a play well cast and acted all through was not enough recognised in America then—and indeed is not enough recognised in London to-day; not nearly enough by the “business” managers or syndicates—better, but still not enough, by the actor-managers (in whom, however, as an institution, I believe)—only thoroughly by the author, to whom his little parts are wellnigh as precious as his

big ones, since on the inter-action of big and little, or greater and lesser, depends the balance of his play.

To return from a vain protest into which I ought not to have been betrayed—for does not everybody except an author know his own business best?—these pleasant weeks in New York were varied by two or three little excursions; great distances were not in my programme on this occasion. I went to Boston in company with Peter Dunne, whose “Mr. Dooley” had already made him what the papers in the States call a “national figure,” and had—what’s more—almost made politics fashionable, or at least a thing that a polite person might talk about. I have been with him in other delightful cities since, but never had a better time than with him and his wife on that occasion in Boston. For—as was to be expected but was none the less gratifying—we found Boston still there—a city I love, a city whose dignity and charm still triumphed (and surely triumphs still?) over its importance and its “commercial activity.” (They say now that Oxford, too, is threatened with too much prosperity and development. Could there not be a Society for the Diversion of Development?) And we also found something almost as rare, I should imagine, as Boston—a gentleman (I mean the word in its most thorough sense) who combined the gift of running a most excellent hotel with such

an admiration of literature—as embodied for the moment in the persons of Peter and myself—that he was with difficulty prevailed upon to let us pay for anything, and placed at our disposal a fine carriage and pair, in which we rolled about magnificently. So nobly does Boston maintain her literary traditions.

Two other little expeditions I made—both in company with my host Russell. We went to Washington as guests of Thomas Nelson Page. I remember this visit not only because of its pleasantness but more especially as the occasion of a long and illuminating talk with Page. Neither of my visits had afforded me any opportunity of seeing the Southern States (save for an even exceptionally “flying” visit to Richmond on my first trip), or of learning anything about life and conditions there, and my political predilections had made me rather deaf to anything that might be said for the South against the North on the questions that had been or were in issue between them. Page, speaking out of the fullness of a lifetime’s knowledge and study, did not make me, or seek to make me, retrospectively a Secessionist or a Pro-Slavery man, but he considerably modified and widened my one-sided view, and he said one thing which has a bearing on the burning question in the United States to-day—the question of Prohibition. “If there were no liquor,” he said, “there would

be no lynching." For, save in most exceptional cases, it is sexual crimes that lead to the "wild justice"—and sometimes to a wild injustice—of revenge, and they are due to the influence of drink. "Without drink, we should have no trouble with the Negroes to-day," he added. I do not assume to pronounce on Prohibition, for I find thoughtful Americans whom I meet differing greatly about it, but all puzzled and perplexed by the difficulty and complexity of the case. But it is highly desirable that Englishmen, inclined perhaps to think the whole thing just a folly and nuisance, should realise and bear in mind that the problem is complicated by factors with which we here—in the home islands at least, whatever may be the case in some parts of the Empire—are fortunate enough not to have to deal. America and Great Britain cannot bear one another's burdens, but they will do well to try to understand one another's difficulties—an effort really more useful, on both sides of the Atlantic, than too much criticism—and even than too many compliments.

As with the Southern States, so with American country life—I had seen nothing of it except such glimpses as I got out of the windows of trains. So that I accepted with more than common pleasure an invitation to stay for a week-end at George Gould's place at Lakewood, New Jersey. I had met and liked him, and

I had seen and admired Mrs. Gould when she was Miss Edith Kingdon. I did not, however, in this case, find myself in anything very like the big country houses which I had seen in England and Scotland. Nor was it anything like what we now call a villa. But one may imagine that, *mutatis mutandis*, the “villa” which a wealthy Roman built for himself at Baiae, or—under the Empire—a Romanised Gallic noble in Provence—was rather on the same lines; the central mansion on one side of a great courtyard, with subsidiary buildings ranged round—the latter including, in this case, besides offices and stabbings, courts for tennis (real tennis, I mean—was it not the cradle of a champion of the world?) and squash-rackets, and a range of bachelor-quarters where we single men lived as independent a life as we pleased, subject to taking our places—only too willingly—at table for lunch and dinner at the big house. An omnibus stood always outside, ready to carry us to and fro. And on the Sunday morning Mrs. Gould drove me a few miles to a most sumptuous “country club,” where we drank cocktails and watched polo, and I was reminded of Tuxedo where I had gone to read six years before—a beautiful place where, between a magnificent dinner and a no less princely supper, I was asked whether I “cared to” (Most courteous—I was really there under

contract!) read for not more—certainly not more—than just half-an-hour; which I did—and earned more money per minute than I have ever done before or since. At such places as these two life was luxurious indeed, but not lazy. If in Scotland everybody is up and about, killing something, at Tuxedo and Lakewood everybody was up and about, playing something; the dinners were well-earned.

My holiday came to an end; I had to sail home in the middle of April. And, without resorting to that extravagance of compliment which I have ventured gently to deprecate, I may, in my own case, say that I "carried away the pleasantest impression." For, besides all that I carried in my memory, there sailed in the same boat the American girl who a few months later became my wife.

## XV

### THE OTHER HALF OF LIFE

**T**HUS far these memories and notes shall go, and no farther. In 1903 I turned forty and almost simultaneously I turned Benedict. The two events together constitute a “divide” in my life on the edge of which my pen may well arrest its course. Youth—even in the most liberal interpretation of the word—was gone, and my manner of living was changed; a man marrying at five and twenty may be said rather to develop his life than to change it, but one who, for this reason or that, postpones his marriage till middle age, or the threshold of it, does more; he leaves behind him what has become a settled habit of existence, a way of living which, though it may be only half his actual lifetime, seems, in retrospect, to be a life complete in itself. Anyhow—and to put it at its lowest—half my life was done; in a chronological regard, indeed, probably more than half, but the time has not yet come for that nice reckoning of years, and will not come, I hope, just yet. We will call it a half—chronologically.

In another sense also it is only a half of a life of which any attempt at a record has been made here. Save for incidental references, rendered necessary or at least natural by the matter with which I was dealing, I have not discussed or described living people—neither acquaintances whom I have met among public men or in literary and artistic society, nor private and intimate friends, even though many of them too have a place, of one kind or another, in the public eye. In the case of the former it is difficult to judge what degree of candour of estimate is consonant with courtesy—and without candour what value could lie in any opinion expressed?—or how far what passes in private can properly be made public. It is better to take no chances, even at the cost of losing some interesting or amusing recollections, and to be damned for dullness rather than for indecorum. At least, I suppose so. It is a large and general question whether in this world it pays to try to be a gentleman. There might be a “symposium” on it; I won’t suggest the contributors.

As to my friends, the men and women with whom I have spent my leisure—and often more than what ought to have been my leisure—in intimate and jocund companionship, I might indeed follow the august example of Marcus Aurelius at the outset of the “*Meditations*,” and under the heading of their

respective names catalogue what I owe to each of them, what I have learnt from each, occasionally what mistaken ideas some of them have corrected. I don't think that I will. They do not need to be assured of my attachment, and would not, I believe, welcome a formal or public acknowledgment of it. Collectively I can thank them for all that I have received—for companionship and affection, first and foremost—and also for experiences, for sights and scenes, which without them would not have come my way. But for anything beyond that I am tongue-tied. Here again perhaps I take—or am by my temperament restricted to—the safer part. In the eyes of his subject the eulogist may go wellnigh as wrong as the critic; when you praise Mr. X's circumspection, he may wonder that his courage has not struck you more; if you laud Miss Y's wit, she may be surprised that the more obvious topic of her beauty did not engross your attention. It is a cynical saying—but, as usual, with some truth in it—that people like to be praised most for what they least possess; and sometimes, too, they prize most in themselves the things that are least worth possessing.

For the rest, there is little of interest to say about what was not always intended to be but has turned out to be a very quiet and uneventful life; even my travels have never led me far away from the beaten track, and

I have seen only what everybody who has travelled at all has seen. Most of my time has been spent either in writing at a desk or in reading in an armchair. And yet I have not written any very great amount, and I am not a well-read man, at least in the common sense of the term. My friend Arnold Bennett recently expressed wonder that a novelist should ever be without an idea for a novel. This remark makes me envy the quantity of his ideas as much as I have always envied their quality. For I am enured to long—and to increasingly long—periods of barrenness. And my reading has been subject to severe and injurious limitations of taste—I might, indeed, say, of ability. There are whole regions of literature which hold for me no delight; there are writers authoritatively declared to be eminent or exquisite whose works I cannot, in the vulgar but expressive phrase, stick at any price. My mind is intractable and does not readily accept tuition; if I want to know a writer, I like to read him for myself, rather than to be told about him in a “critical study.” Over-refinement and embroidery repel me, and I am inclined to distrust the significance of the insignificant. Of course I have read a large number of novels, both old and new—and the great ones with the “admiration and despair” which the reading of Hume inspired in Gibbon. Or so Gibbon says, at any rate, perhaps

desirous of paying a pretty compliment or seduced by the charm of a pretty antithesis. He must have known that he was a greater historian than Hume, though not to all tastes a better writer. But the real bent of my mind—the thing I find myself turning to, when no thought of what I “ought to read” intrudes—is to study human nature directly and not through the imagination and interpretation even of great men—to read history, memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, diaries, things in which actual doings and sayings are preserved. Even here we are not free from imagination, or from the colouring of prejudice, vanity, and self-delusion, but we get as near the naked facts of human nature as we can hope to get, short of the Day of Judgment.

Led on by this curiosity to know—as near at first-hand as possible—the processes and vagaries of the human mind, I began to study anthropology—at first, and rather by chance, in Spencer and Gillen's books about the aboriginal tribes of Australia. Very curious! Primitive people who had church services about three months long! I must know more of this, I said. I read *The Golden Bough*, and enjoyed, or suffered, a blaze—even a glare—of illumination. I am not qualified to discuss—hardly even to praise this great book (growing greater, too, in more than one sense,

with every new edition or supplementary study—Sir James Frazer leaves his disciples no rest)—I merely record that it transformed my ideas as to the processes of human thought and gave a new understanding of the Greek and Roman religions which I had indeed studied but found, up till then, little more than the picturesque, idle, and often disreputable tales which Plato gently dismisses—along with poets—from his *Republic*.

Perhaps that is over-stated, for I had been to some extent familiar with previous theories and speculations as to the origin and meaning of these myths. I should rather say that, in the light of my new reading, they fell into their place in a great whole, still conjectural in many respects, yet gradually emerging into something like a universality of human psychology so far as it touches religious experience. I read more books—notably those of Miss Jane Harrison, a great writer as well as a learned student (She is, by the way, the only woman I have ever known who writes eloquently about wine)—and presently it seemed as if not only the oldest of beliefs and the most fantastic of rituals took their place within this emerging universality, but also the revered beliefs and the august rituals of the great religions. I went on to study these—naturally with a primary interest in Christianity itself—deeply conscious, of course, that I was (as I still am) totally

lacking in equipment for original research or criticism and only able to take the work of scholars and gain what I could from it by means of comparing the evidence and conclusions of one writer with those of others, and by judging and sifting till I got what seemed to be a probable result.

As to the spirit in which I have pursued these studies I will say two things only first, that I brought to them a mind not conscious of any bias—there was nothing that I desired to establish, nothing that I desired to disprove; I wanted only to get as near the truth as possible; secondly, that I bore in mind what I had learnt at Oxford—to look not for differences and distinctions, but for the great things wherein great men and great creeds agree—to stumble on towards some idea of the manner in which it is the way of men to regard and to conceive of the gods or of God. If such a thing—an attitude with even some elements of universality—could be established, it might still be wrong in the sense of not corresponding to the reality of God, but surely it would have some significance, and, at least, a profound interest.

The results of this quest of mine—so far as I have arrived at anything that could be digested into a result—have no value for anybody but myself. Hampered by lack of knowledge, of leisure, and of system (system is

hard to evolve without the other two), I have been the merest amateur, and indeed I would not have talked of the matter at all, had it not engrossed so much of my time and thoughts since comparatively early manhood that to make no mention of it—or even a merely passing mention—would give a false idea of that other half of life with which these pages do not in the main deal, but which I have felt that I must briefly indicate in this concluding section. So much is indeed incumbent on me in mere gratitude (as the reference to my living friends was) since through these interests I have enjoyed a small share in what must, I think, be the happiest of all lives—the life of a student in any branch of knowledge.

I begin to perceive that this talking about oneself is a dangerous and insidious thing; it might easily become a habit in a man who yields to its first approaches. For here am I, not only exceeding my appointed limit of years—much of what I have just been saying applies more to this side of the “divide” of 1903 than to the other side of it—but also, under the guise of just mentioning things with which I have not dealt, coming perilously near to discussing them all the same. Yet I may perhaps ask indulgence for a few last words about the occupation to which I finally

settled down, after abandoning the various aspirations or ambitions which I had in the course of my life entertained.

Player, lawyer, politician—all these are engaged in occupations essentially gregarious. They may prepare in private, but they perform in public, in the company of their brethren, in competition with whom they are constantly testing their abilities and rubbing up their wits. The man of letters is in essence a solitary creature. He has to be left alone—or, at any rate, by abstracting his thoughts from his surroundings, to make himself mentally alone—while he works. He sits eating out sometimes his own heart, and always his own brains and emotions, ingredients which have to be mixed in with the other materials of the concoction which he is making. He reminds me—more than of anyone else—of a village cobbler sitting alone in his little shop, cross-legged and orientally absorbed in patching an old shoe to make it fit for more service. And this seclusion, this imprisonment, he prizes, and so far as in him lies, fiercely guards—himself his own gaoler! The most kindly and Christian visitor is not welcome; even those nearest to his heart are rank intruders. “Do I interrupt you, darling?” asked Lady Byron, as she poked a smiling face in at her husband’s

study door in the early days of their marriage. "Yes, damnably," answered the poet. In this respect the pursuit seems rather an inhuman business.

And sometimes it seems to be rather inhumanely treated, in that no excuses are allowed to plead for it. If a player fails to make a hit, it is charitably remarked that he is "ill served by the author"; Bench and Bar conspire to shuffle the lawyer's mistake off on to his client's shoulders; the politician is abused (in public, anyhow) only by his opponents—for reasons that everybody understands—and he can give as good as he gets. But the author (I might perhaps extend the remark to workers in other arts, but let the writer stand as representative) has to bear all the brunt of his faults and iniquities. He is not allowed to plead that the state of society or the general level of education is really responsible for books like his, or—in a less humble vein—that it is useless to throw pearls of any but a very inferior variety before animals of an extremely inferior breed. No, he has nothing and nobody on which or on whom he can shuffle off the obligations which he has rashly undertaken. And he—even the common run of him—is often reproached for not being "great." Fancy actually incurring reproach for not being great! A man might as well be blamed for not being the Apollo Belvedere or a woman for not

equalling the Venus of Milo. To what occupation outside the arts do we apply such a cruel criterion? To judges, to bishops, to politicians, to popular favourites of the stage, to successful men of business? The worst of it is that the wretched artist cannot escape from the feeling that, cruel as the criterion is, there is an element of justice in it. The ordinary work of the world must be carried on by the best instruments that happen at the moment to be available. But what is a man doing in the arts at all unless he is great? So oppressive may this misgiving become that not a few writers (here I will not presume to speak of the other arts) take refuge in the conviction that, whatever envious people may say or write, they really are great. If they did not adopt this opinion, they would be incapable of pursuing their vocation in peace of mind.

To set against these drawbacks, the life has great attractions for anyone who is even moderately successful in it. Its failures are numerous and terribly sad—such a destruction of high hopes, often such a deep, unreasonable, bitter grudge, almost always such an incapacity for any other work! But a writer who possesses, or can make, a decent competence has much to say for his choice of a calling. He lives a free and independent life. He can go where he will and dwell where he will. He carries his stock-in-trade under

his hat—he has no overhead expenses; his outfit of paper, pen, and ink can be carried in a small case or bought at the nearest shop. He is sufficient unto himself. He does not belong to any service, organisation, party, or hierarchy. He has no superiors from whom he must take orders, no subordinates to whom he must give them (for my part, if there is one thing I hate more than taking orders, it is giving them); he has no servants and no masters—save one large, remote, impalpable master to whom he must at the end answer for his doings, but whose judgment reaches him so gradually, so gently, that he will hardly believe that it is a final condemnation, and can still strive to reverse it in an unquenched and ardent hope.

As he has no servants and no masters, so he has no rivals and no competitors in any real sense. The success of others does not hinder his success, nor their failure help it. He can admire without grudging, and pity without a secret and mean satisfaction. There is room for everybody; nobody need be crowded out. He has only one man to beat, if he can. That is himself. To learn to write better is his only necessary, as it is his only legitimate, ambition. A calling which offers immunity from common human failings is not to be despised. And, in all seriousness, the literary life is to a sensible man superior to most others in that respect.

I have tried to sketch the merits and demerits, the advantages and drawbacks, of literature as a profession and the occupation of a lifetime—(As a diversion or a hobby there seem to me to be no drawbacks and great attractions.)—because I thought the inside view of an old stager might be of some interest. But the balancing of pros and cons is probably idle work; or at least a man cannot strike the balance for himself until he is irrevocably committed to his course—until he has taken the plunge, to find the waters rough or smooth, to sink or swim. Whether a man has the highest gift or the humblest—from the great poet to the fecund teller of stories acceptable to uncritical readers—the matter is one rather of impulse than of choice. He who writes to amuse himself, or to vindicate himself, or to leave a record of someone whom he has loved or admired, may remain an amateur—and his state is blessed. But he who must write and cannot be happy unless he is writing is almost bound to “turn professional,” and to take the consequences; of which fact the foregoing pages furnish a humble example. *Habent sua fata libelli;* it is true also of their authors.

THE END













